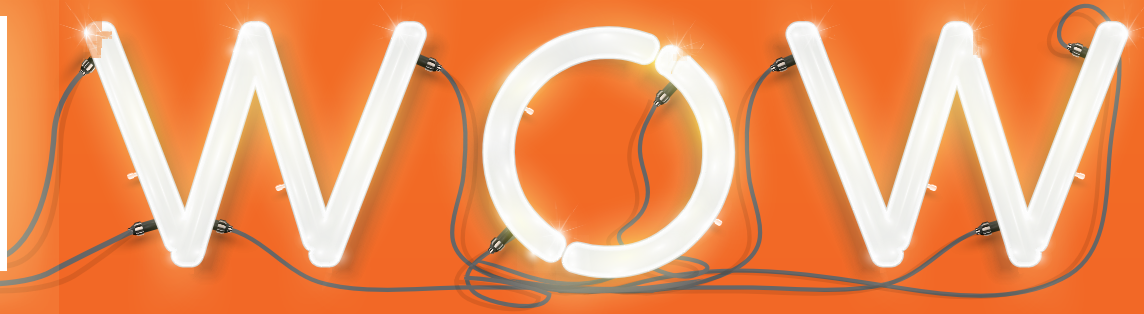


LA  
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WITHOUT WALLS FESTIVAL 2017

PRESS KIT

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## LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCES 2017 WITHOUT WALLS (WOW) FESTIVAL TO TAKE PLACE OCTOBER 19 – 22

### *ACCLAIMED BIENNIAL FESTIVAL MOVES TO DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO FOR ELECTRIFYING WEEKEND OF IMMERSIVE AND SITE-BASED WORK*

La Jolla, CA – La Jolla Playhouse, nationally-renowned for its commitment to the development of new work and new theatrical forms, is pleased to announce the projects and collaborators for its third **Without Walls (WOW) Festival** of immersive and site-based work. The **2017 WOW Festival** will take place **October 19 – 22** in **downtown San Diego** and surrounding areas, in collaboration with several partners, including **The New Children's Museum, San Diego Public Library; Horton Plaza Park, Westfield Corporation; Bread & Salt** and **Border X Brewing**. Also new to this year's event is the appointment of **Meiyin Wang** as Festival Director.

Tickets for WoW Festival productions, ranging from free to \$35, are available online at [WOWFestival.org](http://WOWFestival.org) or by calling **(858) 550-1010**.

"Building on the success of our previous Without Walls Festivals, our 2017 outing will showcase works that redefine our conception of theatre, as well as the customary relationship between audience and art. In a new twist, we're bringing this year's Festival to downtown San Diego and environs, giving the Playhouse an opportunity to expand our reach, develop new community partnerships and offer audiences even more innovative sites and experiences," said **La Jolla Playhouse Artistic Director Christopher Ashley**.

Like previous WoW Festivals, the 2017 event will showcase multiple performances by acclaimed local, national and international artists, as well as a selection of family-friendly offerings, occurring simultaneously throughout the four-day event. Projects include **Super Night Shot** by the Berlin-based **Gob Squad Arts Collective**; a Playhouse-commissioned, performative installation entitled **Model Home**, by award-winning scenic designer and MacArthur "Genius" Fellow **Mimi Lien** (Playhouse's *Milk Like Sugar*); **The Quiet Volume**, by UK-based artists **Ant Hampton** and **Tim Etchells**; **Among Us**, by Los Angeles-based Dutch director **Marika Splint**; Charles Mee's **Under Construction: An American Masque**, from **Sledgehammer Theatre** (2015 WoW Festival's *Heaven on Earth*) in association with **UC San Diego Department of Theatre & Dance**; **So Say We All's Incoming: Sex, Drugs, and Copenhagen**; **Shasta Geaux Pop**, by New York-based artists **Ayesha Jordan** and **Charlotte Brathwaite**; **4x4 TJ Night**, from the Tijuana-based **Lux Boreal Dance Company**; **CVRTAIN**, by Los Angeles-based artist **Yehuda Duenyas**; **The Quest 3.0**, developed by La Jolla Playhouse in partnership with **The New Children's Museum**; Trisha Brown Dance Company's **In Plain Site**, presented by **ArtPower**; **Waking La Llorona**, by **Optika Moderna/ David Israel Reynoso** (Playhouse's WOW Festival 2015 production of *Healing Wars*); **And Then You Wait**, by UC San Diego M.F.A. candidates **Dylan Key** and **Lily Padilla** and **OSLO**, by San Diego-based artist **Max Robert Daily**.



Additionally, the WOW Festival will include a new piece from award-winning puppetry artist and 2017 Playhouse Artist-in-Residence **Basil Twist** (2013 WOW Festival's *Seafoam Sleepwalk*, *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots*) entitled **FAETOPIA: A Faerie Flash Mob**, presented in partnership with **The New Children's Museum**. Joining Twist will be puppeteers from the **San Diego Guild of Puppetry** and the UC San Diego percussion ensemble **red fish blue fish** in a whimsical new 10-minute piece that will run multiple times a day at The New Children's Museum on Saturday, October 21 and Sunday, October 22 as part of **WOW Festival Family Days**.

In addition to *FAETOPIA: A Faerie Flash Mob*, **WOW Festival Family Days** will feature a host of art-making activities and creation stations presented by the **Timken Museum of Art**, the **Mingei International Museum** and **Museum of Photographic Arts**. These activities will take place at **Museum Park**, across from The New Children's Museum, on Saturday, October 21 and Sunday, October 22.

The WOW Festival will also offer several special events, including the **WOW Festival Club**, a fun, after-hours dance party where audiences and artists can mingle. The Festival Club will take place immediately following each *Shasta Geaux Pop* performance at Bread & Salt. Additionally, numerous **artist panels** will be offered throughout the weekend, as well as a free **Gob Squad Arts Collective Workshop** that will provide an insight into the strategies and methodologies employed by Gob Squad when creating new works. Participants will create and present written text, spoken word, improvisational dance and experimental performance structures in order to develop material around the personal, the autobiographical and the political.

The WOW Festival is made possible in part through the generous support of the **National Endowment for the Arts**, the **County of San Diego**, the **Wallace Foundation**, the **James Irvine Foundation**, **Delta Air Lines: Official Airline of La Jolla Playhouse**, **KIND Snacks**, **San Diego Gas & Electric**, **UC San Diego Extension – Urban Campus** and **Westfield**.

Since its inception in 2009, **Without Walls (WOW)** has become one of San Diego's most popular and acclaimed performance programs. This signature Playhouse initiative is designed to break the barriers of traditional theatre, offering immersive and site-inspired works that venture beyond the physical confines of the Playhouse facilities. Over the last nine years, the Playhouse has been commissioning and presenting a series of immersive and site-specific productions at locations throughout the San Diego community, including *Susurrus* (2010), *The Car Plays: San Diego* (2011), *Sam Bendrix at the Bon Soir* (2012), *Accomplice: San Diego* (2013), *El Henry* (2014), *The Grift at the Lafayette Hotel* (2015), *The Bitter Game* (2016), as well as the 2013 and 2015 WOW Festivals.

The Tony Award-winning **La Jolla Playhouse** is internationally-renowned for creating some of the most exciting and adventurous work in American theatre, through its new play development initiatives, its innovative Without Walls series, artist commissions and residencies. Currently led by Artistic Director and 2017 Tony Award winner Christopher Ashley and Managing Director Michael S. Rosenberg, the Playhouse was founded in 1947 by Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire and Mel Ferrer, and reborn in 1983 under the artistic leadership of Des McAnuff. La Jolla Playhouse has had 28 productions transfer to Broadway, garnering 38 Tony Awards, among them the currently-running, Tony Award-nominated hit *Come From Away*, along with *Jersey Boys*, *Memphis*, *The Who's Tommy*, *Big River*, as well as *Billy Crystal's 700 Sundays* and the Pulitzer Prize-winning *I Am My Own Wife*, both fostered as part of the Playhouse's Page To Stage Program. [LaJollaPlayhouse.org](http://LaJollaPlayhouse.org).



## La Jolla Playhouse's WOW Festival 2017 Projects

Partner: The New Children's Museum, 200 W. Island Avenue

### ***FAETOPIA: A Faerie Flash Mob***

**Directed and Designed by Basil Twist**

**Presented in partnership with The New Children's Museum**

Tickets: Children – Free; Adults – \$13 for museum admission (11am performance free; viewable from outside museum); Performances: Sat/Sun: 11am; 12pm; 1pm; 2pm; 3pm  
*Faetopia* will delight children and adults alike as it celebrates the art of Marionette puppetry in a spontaneous, 10-minute faerie flash mob that takes center stage at the museum at the top of each hour, from 11am to 3pm. Twist will be joined by puppeteers from the **San Diego Guild of Puppetry** and the UC San Diego percussion ensemble **red fish blue fish** in this whimsical, immersive new piece.

### ***The Quest 3.0***

**Developed by La Jolla Playhouse in partnership with The New Children's Museum**

Tickets: Free; Performances: Sat/Sun: starts every 45 minutes, 10am – 4:00pm

An interactive family adventure that challenges participants to join the Society of Creative Thinkers as they embark on a great journey – exploring artifacts, gathering clues, engaging in clandestine meetings and solving peculiar puzzles – in order to discover a surprising truth.

### **Family Days Activities**

**Mingei International Museum; Museum of Photographic Arts;**

**Timken Museum of Art**

Tickets: Free; Sat/Sun from 10am to 4pm: ongoing interactive art-making activities and creation stations at Museum Park across from The New Children's Museum.

Partner: San Diego Public Library, 330 Park Boulevard

### ***Super Night Shot***

**Gob Squad Arts Collective**

Tickets: \$29; Performances: Thu/Fri/Sat at 7:30pm

*Super Night Shot* is a magical journey through the night-time streets of San Diego. Full of unexpected surprises, the public become co-stars in a movie that celebrates unplanned meetings with strangers, serendipity and chance. Anything can happen, and usually does in Gob Squad's riveting multi-screen piece.

### ***The Quiet Volume***

**Ant Hampton and Tim Etchells**

Tickets: \$20; Performances: every 15 minutes, 11am – 4:45pm; Sun 1pm – 5:45pm  
Recorded instructions and a stack of carefully selected books direct patrons through this contemplative, self-generated performance for two audience members sitting side by side. Taking cues from words both written and whispered, participants find themselves burrowing an unlikely path through a pile of books, taking a usually deeply personal experience into the surrounding space, exposing the strange magic at the heart of the reading experience.

Partner: Border X Brewing, 2181 Logan Avenue

### ***Incoming: Sex, Drugs, and Copenhagen***

**So Say We All**

Tickets: \$10; Performance Times: Fri/Sat/Sun at 7:00pm

True uncensored stories from the lives of America's military, told in their own words, about the private and sometimes illicit escapes sought out by service members during their service and the time that follows as they readjust to the civilian world. Hilarious, surprising and honest to the core – featuring a different cast every night – this newest offering by So Say We All will defy any notions you have about our service members.



Partner: Bread & Salt, 1955 Julian Avenue

***Shasta Geaux Pop***

**Ayesha Jordan and Charlotte Brathwaite**

Tickets: \$20; Performances: Fri at 9:00pm; Sat at 8:30pm; Sun at 8:30pm

Audiences are invited to celebrate the outrageously hilarious and completely uncensored *Shasta Geaux Pop*, as she brings her signature brand of basement get-down party to San Diego. Irreverent and uplifting, Shasta keeps it real with her gospel of laughter and free flowing emcee style to get this immersive underground Hip-Hop party jumping.

***Under Construction: An American Masque***

**By Charles Mee; Presented by Sledgehammer Theatre,**

**in association with UCSD Department of Theatre & Dance**

Tickets: \$29; Performances: Thu: 8:15pm; Fri: 7:30pm; Sat: 7pm; Sun: 7pm

Set within a pop-up banquet hall, spectators will be immersed within a collage of America today—scenes and songs and dances inspired by both Norman Rockwell of the 1950s and by installation artist Jason Rhoades. Rockwell and Rhoades juxtaposed side by side—then and now, the red states and the blue states, where we grew up and where we live today, in a piece that is, like America, permanently under construction.

***4x4 TJ Night***

**Curated by Lux Boreal Dance Company**

Tickets: \$15; Performances: Thu at 7pm; Fri at 6pm

A selection of stunning dance and performance works set for a 4 foot by 4 foot stage. Choreographers from both sides of the border take inspiration from the tiny stage to create work that is intimate and electrifying. Usually performed in bars and non-traditional spaces, *4x4 TJ Night* takes dance off the proscenium stage and into the center of the room for a vibrant, immediate experience.

***Waking La Llorona***

**David Israel Reynoso/Optika Moderna**

Tickets: \$29; Performances: Thu – Sun; Times TBD

A multisensory, individual experience inspired by one of Mexico's most legendary tales. Each visitor will encounter the doctor and be guided through a 30-minute experimental immersive exploration of *La Llorona*.

***CVRTAIN***

**Yehuda Duenyas**

Tickets: Free; Performances: Fri: 5pm – 11pm; Sat: 2pm – 10pm; Sun: 2pm – 10pm

*Cvrtain* is a VR experience that puts you center stage in a beautiful theater for your final curtain call. The piece is played with the gestures of performance, as guests have to bow, blow kisses, curtsy, and more, in order to get the audience to clap, cheer, and lose their minds with adoration. The experience takes place on a proscenium installation in the **Athenaeum Arts Center** space where onlookers get to watch the participants, who ultimately perform to audiences, both virtual and real, at the same time.

***And Then You Wait***

**Dylan Key and Lily Padilla**

Tickets: Free; Performances: Fri at 5pm - 10pm; Sat at 2pm - 10pm; Sun at 2pm - 10pm

In a perfect fallout shelter, there should be at least nine square feet of room per person. This is far from perfect. A community of survivors gather to wait for the world's end or its rebirth. They teach, grieve, fall in love and remember. A meditation on hope and resilience in the face of uncertainty, *And Then You Wait* is an immersive audio installation in a grain silo that will get close and talk to you in the dark.



## **OSLO**

### **Max Robert Daily**

Tickets: Free; Performances: Ongoing Fri: 5pm – 6pm and 9pm – 12am;

Sat/Sun: 4pm – 7pm and 8:30pm – 11:30pm

The proprietor of Oslo's Sardine Bar was shipwrecked years earlier, when his Danish-flagged freighter, the crew, the Radio Free band, and the cargo of the finest sardines were all presumed lost. Until October 20 – 21. If enough people come dine, he may be able to get a life raft, a flare gun, or, may just get more beer and decide to stay. Come for the freshly canned fish and stay for the artworks and spontaneous performances.

## **WOW Festival Club**

Tickets: Free; Open Fri: 6pm – 12am; Sat/Sun: 4pm – 12am

This pop-up after-hours dance club is the perfect place to hang out with artists, audience members and visitors. Grab a post-show drink, delicious bites and invigorating conversations with friends. Immediately after *Shasta Geaux Pop*, the Brick Room in Bread & Salt transforms into an underground, impromptu club with a cash bar and a different DJ every night.

Partner: Horton Plaza Park, 900 Fourth Avenue

### **Model Home**

#### **Created and Designed by Mimi Lien; A La Jolla Playhouse Commission**

Tickets: Free; Performances: Ongoing Thu/Fri/Sat/Sun: continuous from 11am – 7pm

*Model Home* is an urban intervention/installation situated in downtown San Diego, anchored by a large construction crane hoisting a brightly colored, archetypal house, high up in the air. At once incongruous and familiar, the performative installation reflects the shifting infrastructure of a changing city, and asks, what makes a home?

## **Among Us**

### **Marika Splint**

Tickets: \$20; Performances: Fri: 2pm, 5pm; Sat/Sun: 11am, 2pm, 5pm

In *Among Us*, the audience members are the protagonists, and the city is the stage. This walking piece takes you to places you may have passed many times, but invites you to view them through a different lens. How do you relate to the strangers on the streets? What can you imagine about the lives of the people that brush by? *Among Us* moves from observation to participation, culminating in a game of choice and affiliation that gradually illuminates the hidden social structures that define us.

Partner: ArtPower, Revelle College near UC San Diego Theatre District

### **Trisha Brown Dance Company's *In Plain Site***

#### **Presented by ArtPower**

Tickets: \$35; Performances: Sat/Sun: 2pm and 5pm

In planning since before Trisha Brown's death earlier this year, ArtPower presents a unique iteration of *In Plain Site*, a site-specific work created for the UC San Diego campus by Trisha Brown Dance Company. The company adapts Brown's signature works around the campus, honoring her commitment to the presentation of performances in nontraditional venues, a format she helped pioneer.



## WOW Festival Artist/Partner Biographies

Director **Charlotte Brathwaite** (*Shasta Geaux Pop*) is known for staging classical and unconventional texts, dance, visual/performance art, multi-media, plays, site-specific and music events. Her work is seen in the Americas, Europe, the Caribbean and Asia and ranges in subject matter from the historical past to the distant future illuminating issues of race, sex, power and the complexities of the human condition. Named by Playbill as “one of the “up-and-coming women in theatre to watch”, Brathwaite continues to create her own work and has ongoing collaborations with such noted artists as Peter Sellars, Meshell Ndegeochello, Justin Hicks, Abigail DeVille, Ayesha Jordan to name a few.

**Max Robert Daily** (*OSLO*) Max Robert Daily is a San Diego artist who works in performance and visual art, using any medium that best expresses the story he is telling. He attended the Cotsen Center for Puppetry at Calarts and performs extensively in puppetry, mime, and clowning, as well as being a published author in children's illustration books. Loves teaching and inspiring when he isn't working his day job as an art preparator for the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego.

**Yehuda Duenyas** (*CVRTAIN*) is an artist, Experience Director, and founder of Emmy Award-winning Mindride, an artist drive company specializing in next generation experiential art and entertainment. *Cvrtain* is created by Yehuda Duenyas, and commissioned by Performance Space 122 with an implementation grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation for the Building Demand for the Performing Arts Program.

**Tim Etchells** (*The Quiet Volume*) is an artist and a writer based in the UK whose work shifts between performance, visual art and fiction. He has worked in a wide variety of contexts, notably as the leader of the world-renowned Sheffield-based performance group Forced Entertainment. Exhibiting and presenting work in significant institutions all over the world, he is currently Professor of Performance & Writing at Lancaster University. Etchells' work has been shown recently at Tate Modern, Cubitt, Hayward Gallery and Bloomberg SPACE in London, at Turner Contemporary, The Grundy and Compton Verney in the UK, at Witte de With, Rotterdam, and MUHKA (Antwerp).

For 20 years, Berlin/Nottingham based **Gob Squad Arts Collective** (*Super Night Shot*) has been searching for new ways to combine media and performance, producing stage shows, video installations, radio plays, interactive live films and urban interventions. They try to scratch beneath the shiny, pixelated surface of the 21st century, seeking out the dark corners and hidden desires of contemporary culture. Gob Squad was founded in 1994, whilst its members were still at Nottingham Trent and Giessen universities. Berlin has been the group's creative home since 1999. Core members are Johanna Freiburg, Sean Patten, Sharon Smith, Berit Stumpf, Sarah Thom, Bastian Trost and Simon Will.

**Ant Hampton** (*The Quiet Volume*) is a British artist and performance maker whose work, which began in 1998 under the name Rotozaza, has most often involved guiding people through unrehearsed performance situations. From 2007 this started to incorporate the audience: his Autoteatro series tours widely and includes *Etiquette*, *The Quiet Volume*, *Cue China*, *OK OK*, *This Is Not My Voice Speaking* and *The Extra People*. Hampton often collaborates with other artists, including Tim Etchells, Britt Hatzius, Gert-Jan Stam, Ivana Müller and Anna Rispoli.

**Ayesha Jordan** (*Shasta Geaux Pop*) is a New York City-based multidisciplinary performer and creator. *Shasta Geaux Pop* was part of the 2017 Under the Radar Festival and at The Bushwick Starr (Sept 2016). Ayesha was part of the Broadway production of *Eclipsed* at The John Golden Theatre and returned to her role of "The Girl" at The Curran in San Francisco, March 2017. She has performed abroad in Amsterdam, France, Belgium, Germany, Poland, and Japan.



**Dylan Key** (*And Then You Wait*) is a director and theatre artist. His work has been seen at Undermain Theatre, the Dallas Museum of Art, Kitchen Dog Theatre, and site-specific work throughout Dallas. He spent five years as the Artistic Associate of Undermain Theatre and cofounded Shakespeare in the Bar and TRIBE, for which he was named a 2016 Dallas Mastermind. He is a second-year M.F.A. Director at UC San Diego where his past credits include *(w)holeness* (WNPF 2017).

**Mimi Lien** (*Model Home*) is a Tony Award-winning designer of sets/environments for theatre, dance and opera. Arriving at set design from a background in architecture, her work often focuses on the interaction between audience/environment and object/performer. She designs performances and installations ranging in scale from the tiniest black box to a 71-acre meadow. Mimi was named a 2015 MacArthur Fellow, and is the first set designer ever to achieve this distinction. Selected work includes *Natasha, Pierre, & The Great Comet of 1812*, *An Octoroon*, *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music*, and a building-wide installation for the inaugural Philadelphia International Festival of the Arts. She is also a recipient of the Cullman Award for Extraordinary Creativity at Lincoln Center Theater, Drama Desk Award, Lucille Lortel Award, American Theatre Wing Hewes Design Award, LA Drama Critics Circle Award, and an OBIE Award for sustained excellence.

Founded in 2002, **Lux Boreal Dance Company** (*4x4 TJ Night*) is a circle of choreographers and dancers from all over Mexico, converging through dance towards a common language to express their vision of reality through Art. Lux Boreal is part of a bi-national artistic movement, which takes place in the Tijuana – San Diego border region, reinforcing the bonds between artistic communities and diverse audiences. Lux Boreal has been featured in major dance festivals and venues throughout Mexico, and has performed internationally including in the United States, Chile, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Spain, Brazil, Argentina, France, Germany and Ireland.

**Lily Padilla** (*And Then You Wait*) is a playwright, performer and community builder who has developed work in New York City, New Orleans and San Diego, at venues such as the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, INTAR Theatre and the Lark. She is an M.F.A. Playwright at UC San Diego.

**Optika Moderna** (*Waking La Llorona*) is a ground-breaking, immersive company led by San Diego's David Israel Reynoso, the Obie Award-winning costume designer for the Off-Broadway runaway hit *Sleep No More* (Punchdrunk/Emursive). At La Jolla Playhouse, he designed Liz Lerman's *Healing Wars* for La Jolla Playhouse's WOW Festival 2015 and *The Darrell Hammond Project*, directed by Christopher Ashley. His other regional scenic and costume design credits include returning collaborations The Old Globe, American Repertory Theater, Commonwealth Shakespeare Company, Lyric Stage and Gloucester Stage, among many others. His is the recipient of the Elliot Norton Award in Costume Design and a multiple nominee for the IRNE and BroadwayWorld awards.

Founded 20 years ago by UC San Diego music professor Steven Schick, the San Diego-based ensemble **red fish blue fish** (*Faetopia: A Faerie Flash Mob*) performs, records, and premieres works from the last 85 years of western percussion's rich history. The group works regularly with living composers from every continent. Recent projects include the world premiere of Roger Reynolds' *Sanctuary* and the American premiere of James Dillon's epic *Nine Rivers* cycle with the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE). In the Summer of 2011, red fish blue fish collaborated with George Crumb, Dawn Upshaw, and Peter Sellars to premiere the staged version of *The Winds of Destiny*. RFBF has had a huge impact on new music percussion performances, recordings, and education.



**Sledgehammer Theatre** (*Under Construction: An American Masque*) has been San Diego's premier alternative theater for over three decades. Known for their flamboyant, muscular, visually dense and provocative style, American Theater magazine observed "their name should be used as a verb, 'to sledgehammer theater.'" They have produced site-specific work throughout San Diego and elsewhere, including New York City for the Whitney Museum of American Art. Their production of Charles L. Mee's *Heaven on Earth* at the UCSD Powell Structural Engineering Lab was one of the highlights of the 2015 WoW Festival.

**So Say We All** (*Incoming: Sex, Drugs and Copenhagen*) is a proud San Diego-based literary arts non-profit whose mission is to help people tell their stories and tell them better. Veterans are one community in particular that has been talked about more than heard from, and the *Incoming* series strives to provide a forum for that – in print, on radio, and now, on stage. [Sosayweallonline.com](http://Sosayweallonline.com)

**Marike Splint** (*Among Us*) is a Dutch director specializing in site-responsive and immersive theater. Fascinated by the theme of belonging, she explores the relationship between people, places, and identity. She has created shows in sites ranging from wide open meadows to taxicabs, train stations and hotel rooms. Her work has been presented by festivals and theaters all around the world, such as Urbane Kunste Ruhr (Germany), Oerol Festival (The Netherlands) and the Live Arts Exchange Festival (USA). Splint received her MFA in directing from Columbia University and currently serves as a faculty member in the Department of Theater at UCLA.

**Basil Twist** (*Faetopia: A Faerie Flash Mob*) is a third generation puppeteer who lives and works in New York City, and is the sole American graduate of the Ecole Supérieure Nationale des Arts de la Marionnette in France. He has garnered an international reputation as an audacious designer, director and performer. He creates iconic, visionary puppetry worlds with a remarkable range of style and scope, appearing in intimate stages to large orchestra halls. His original stage and opera creations have included *The Araneidae Show*, *Symphonie Fantastique* and *Arias with a Twist*. He has received a MacArthur "Genius" Fellowship, Guggenheim and United States Artist/Ford Fellowships and was recently awarded a Doris Duke Performing Artist Award. At La Jolla Playhouse, Twist's credits include *Seafoam Sleepwalk* at the 2013 WoW Festival, *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Dogugaeshi* and Mabou Mines' *Peter and Wendy*.

Twist was recently named La Jolla Playhouse's 2017 **Artist-in-Residence**. This multi-month residency is designed to give artists the freedom to focus on their ongoing body of work, while becoming immersed in various aspects of the institution, from the stage to the boardroom to the classroom. Previous appointees include Tony Award-winning actor and writer BD Wong and award-winning scenic designer and UC San Diego graduate/faculty member Robert Brill.



### WoW Festival Partners (South to North)

**Border X Brewing** is a Mexican inspired craft brewery specializing in true Mexican flavours combined with traditional craft brewing techniques. As the only Latino, family-owned craft brewery in California, Border X Brewing's roots are firmly planted in the "Border Region" between Mexico and US, and they believe that it is not only a unique geography, but a state of mind. The name celebrates the combinations of the best from both sides of the border. Music, art, food and now, craft beer, intersect in new and exciting ways that are only possible when two unique and distinct cultures cross and influence in both directions. Border X Brewing is committed to exploring this fusion in craft brewing in new, exciting and delicious ways.

A former Weber Bakery turned community arts building located in Logan Heights, **Bread & Salt** is a 40,000 square foot rambling structure filled with galleries, event spaces, offices and a soon to emerge neighborhood cooperative café. It is a nexus of artists, artisans, designers, established arts organizations, and community members. In its time, The Weber Bakery was a stalwart of the community, employing local people and acting as a center of the community, offering jobs, hosting weddings, dances, and a home to community meetings. That which provided sustenance of body also aspired to provide sustenance of soul, of community. That is what Bread & Salt aims to resurrect, in this barrio, because this arts center can help to establish this area as a haven for artists, for creative thought, for inclusion and for diversity.

Founded in 1899, the **Athenaeum Music & Arts Library** has a collection devoted to music and art and presents over 200 cultural events annually, including visual art exhibitions, concerts (classical, jazz, acoustic, new music) and lectures. Studio art classes and printmaking are offered through the Athenaeum School of the Arts in La Jolla and the Athenaeum Art Center (AAC) in Logan Heights. The AAC is a multicultural community center with extensive education and outreach programs.

With a vision of being the place for opportunity, discovery and inspiration, the **San Diego Public Library** is a hub for knowledge and lifelong learning. As the largest library system in the region, it serves a population of more than 1.3 million people. Learn about events at the San Diego Central Library @ Joan & Irwin Jacobs Common and 35 community branch libraries, find links to programs and resources or search for materials in the online catalog at [sandiegolibrary.org](http://sandiegolibrary.org).

**The New Children's Museum** is a new model of children's museum whose mission is to stimulate imagination, creativity and critical thinking in children and families through inventive and engaging experiences with contemporary art. Serving San Diego for 30 years, the Museum opened in 1983 in La Jolla as the Children's Museum/Museo de los Niños and reopened downtown in 2008. The New Children's Museum brings families together in a rich educational environment that fosters creativity — blending elements of children's museums and art museums. The Museum collaborates with contemporary artists on an ongoing basis, both for large-scale thematic exhibitions, individual installations and educational programs for children. The New Children's Museum is a non-profit institution funded by admissions, memberships and community support.

**ArtPower** at UC San Diego builds creative experiences in music, dance, exhibition and food for our collective pleasure and inspiration. They engage diverse audiences through vibrant, challenging, multi-disciplinary performances by emerging and renowned international artists. Through extensive partnerships, ArtPower provides exciting opportunities for research, participation, and creation of new work, igniting powerful dialogue between artists, students, scholars, and the community.



### Additional Family Days Partners

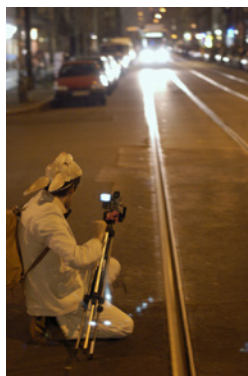
Located in San Diego's Balboa Park, one of 14 California stage-designed cultural districts, the **Mingei International Museum** collects, preserves and exhibits "art of the world, art of the people," including folk art, craft and design from all eras and cultures of the world. A non-profit institution funded by admission, individuals and community support, the Museum offers inspiring exhibitions and diverse educational programs to more than 100,000 visitors a year. Institutional support for Mingei International Museum is provided by the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture.

**The Museum of Photographic Arts** is a center for visual learning located in San Diego's Balboa Park. Its mission is to "inspire, educate and engage the broadest possible audience through the presentation, collection, and preservation of photography, film and video." As a 501(c)(3) organization, MOPA is generously supported by members, individuals, corporations, foundations and government agencies and offers Pay What You Wish admission six days a week.

The **Timken Museum** opened to the public in 1965, is located in Balboa Park and is considered the second most important midcentury building in San Diego, after Louis Kahn's iconic Salk Institute. The Timken's scale provides visitors with a free, accessible cultural experience that allows for the discovery of the collection in an intimate setting. The collection features masterworks that cover over 700 years of history and a tour de force of artists that include Rembrandt, Jacques-Louis David, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, and John Singleton Copley. Ranging from 14th-century altarpieces through 18th-century portraits and landscapes to 19th-century still life paintings, the collection is superb. The Timken is considered one of the finest small museums in the world.



Photos for La Jolla Playhouse's **Without Walls (WOW) Festival 2017**  
 can be accessed at <http://www.lajollaplayhouse.com/media-room>  
 (username: media; password: pelican)



*Gob Squad Arts Collective's Super Night Shot*, presented by La Jolla Playhouse's Without Walls (WOW) Festival 2017, running October 19 -22.



*Shasta Geaux Pop* by Ayesha Jordan and Charlotte Brathwaite, presented by La Jolla Playhouse's Without Walls (WOW) Festival 2017, running October 19 -22.



*CVRTAIN*, by Yehuda Duenyas, presented by La Jolla Playhouse's Without Walls (WOW) Festival 2017, running October 19 -22; photo by Andrew Federman.



*FAETOPIA: A Faerie Flash Mob*, a La Jolla Playhouse commission, created and designed by 2017 Playhouse Artist-in-Residence Basil Twist, presented by La Jolla Playhouse's Without Walls (WOW) Festival 2017, in partnership with The New Children's Museum, running October 19 -22; photo by Landon Nordeman.



*Among Us*, by Marike Splint, presented by La Jolla Playhouse's Without Walls (WOW) Festival 2017, running October 19 -22.



*Incoming: Sex, Drugs and Copenhagen*, by So Say We All, presented by La Jolla Playhouse's Without Walls (WOW) Festival 2017, running October 19 -22.



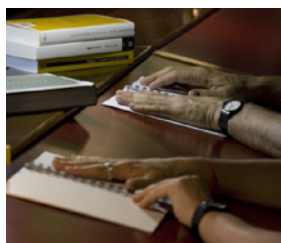
*4x4 TJ Night*, curated by Lux Boreal, presented by La Jolla Playhouse's Without Walls (WOW) Festival 2017, running October 19 -22; photo by Alexandre Steva.



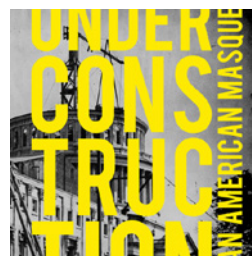
Trisha Brown Dance Company's *In Plain Site*, presented by ArtPower as part of La Jolla Playhouse's Without Walls (WOW) Festival 2017, running October 19 -22; photo by Jim Prisching.



*The Quest 3.0*, developed by La Jolla Playhouse, in partnership with The New Children's Museum, part of Family Days at La Jolla Playhouse's Without Walls (WOW) Festival, running October 19 - 22; photo by Daniel Norwood.



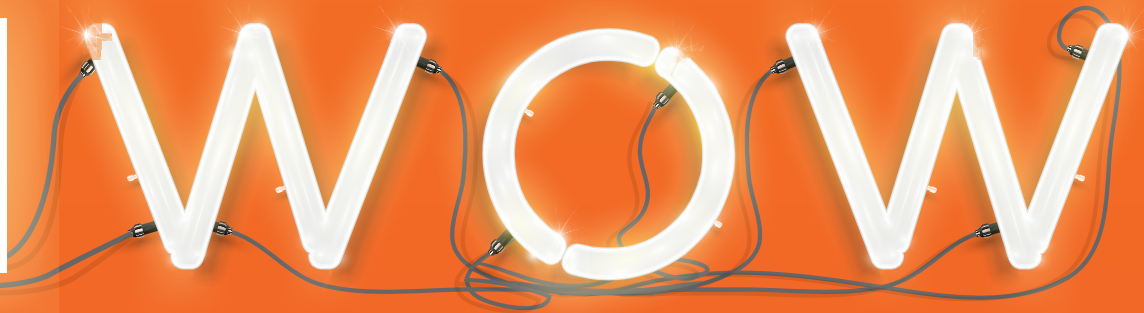
*The Quiet Volume*, by Ant Hampton and Tim Etchells, presented by La Jolla Playhouse's Without Walls (WOW) Festival 2017, running October 19 -22.



Charles Mee's *Under Construction: An American Mask*, by Sledgehammer Theatre, presented by La Jolla Playhouse's Without Walls (WOW) Festival 2017, running October 19 -22.



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WITHOUT WALLS FESTIVAL 2017

# PAST FESTIVALS PRESS CLIPS

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# The New York Times



Sandy Huffaker for The New York Times

A large puppet of Aphrodite is the centerpiece of "Seafoam Sleepwalk," performed during La Jolla Playhouse's Without Walls festival in San Diego.

## Surf's Up, and So Is the Curtain at This Festival

By IAN LOVETT

SAN DIEGO — Sitting silently in a seat was pretty much off limits at the Without Walls festival, a weekend of theater set in, near and around La Jolla Playhouse here. Instead, one play sawed the audience up and down in an elevator (Dramamine recommended). Another put attendees to work in a power plant.

A third show, "Kamchatka," roamed across the playhouse grounds, leaving festivalgoers to debate how far they wanted to follow when the actors fled across the parking lot.

With more than 20 shows at a variety of locations, the inaugural festival, which concluded on Sunday, brought site-specific and immersive performances to the West Coast in a big (and expensive) way, taking advantage of the city's sunny climate while signaling just how quickly this strain of theater is growing in the United States.

"This kind of work really makes a lot of sense to a generation that grew up on YouTube, because everyone is potentially both subject and viewer," said Christopher Ashley, the artistic director of La Jolla Playhouse, which joined forces with the University of California, San Diego and the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego to produce the festival. (Some shows, including the elevator-set "Counterweight," continue through this weekend.)

While site-specific work has been popular in Europe and in avant-garde circles for decades, theater companies like Punchdrunk and Third Rail Projects have scored recent main-

stream hits in New York, with shows like "Sleep No More" and "Then She Fell," which allow audiences to explore elaborate environments while performers move around them.

The organizers of Without Walls, which they hope to produce every other year, are betting that this appetite will only continue to grow, after attracting a total attendance of 9,259 last weekend. The festival was largely financed by at least \$1 million in grants, including \$900,000 for project development from the James Irvine Foundation. Several shows were free, with the others costing \$5 to \$25.

For this first festival, Mr. Ashley said, he wanted to take advantage of the "surreally perfect San Diego weather" by staging as many performances as possible outside.

As a result, many of the works could never make a transition to Broadway. Take "Seafoam Sleepwalk," the puppeteer Basil Twist's take on the birth of the Greek goddess Aphrodite. Best known for his "Symphonie Fantastique," an underwater puppet show staged in a custom 500-gallon fish tank, Mr. Twist went one better this time, setting his show in the Pacific Ocean.

The audience sat on the beach, just down the street from the playhouse, as a 20-foot-tall Aphrodite puppet emerged from the waves, its eyelashes fluttering and its blond seaweed-like hair dripping saltwater. Surfers caught waves around the puppet as the play went on.

"I thought it would be cool if we had stuff coming out of the water," Mr. Twist said. "I mean, where else would stuff come from? We don't have a backstage

or anyplace like that."

Most of the shows, however, put the audience in very close — sometimes uncomfortably close — contact with the performers. One series, aptly titled "The Car Plays," trapped a two-person audience inside a car with two actors for 10-minute vignettes.

In one, the pair of actors trained their focus on the audience members, instructing them to begin, as though they were the ones expected to provide the entertainment. "So they're just going to sit there and stare at us?" one actor said.

Most audiences stayed quiet. But not

### La Jolla plunges into immersive theater.

all. An older couple devised an impromptu, highly sexual plot for the paid performers.

"It's such a social experiment, because people feel like they are all of a sudden onstage, and some feel compelled to perform," one actor, Gary Patent, said afterward.

While La Jolla Playhouse has dabbled in immersive theater before, for most of the year it puts on plays and musicals in a typical theater. Only one festival show was performed onstage there, but it too had an interactive twist.

Created by the German ensemble Rimini Protokoll, the play, "100% San Die-

go," brought together 100 residents of San Diego County to represent the area's demographic makeup. They were asked questions that grew increasingly personal ("Have you ever tried to save a life and failed?"), then were divided and redivided into countless groups based on their answers — a kind of live, shifting pie graph of the region's inhabitants. (The group developed the piece in, and about, Berlin, five years ago.)

Outside, the actors in "Kamchatka" roamed the playhouse grounds, portraying a band of immigrants who had just arrived in the United States. Each carrying a suitcase and wearing an unseasonably thick coat, the actors solicited help from the milling crowd, asking (nonverbally) for food and water, then lifting the person who had fed them into the air in thanks.

Without a stage, though, it was sometimes hard to tell when a performance was supposed to end. Each of the "Car Plays" concluded when a "valet" came to open the car door. Aphrodite sank back into the water at the end of "Seafoam Sleepwalk," and Mr. Twist and his cast began bowing, knee-deep in the Pacific.

After racing across a parking lot, the "Kamchatka" performers began to scale the walls of a nearby college dormitory. Members of the audience helped push them up.

Finally, two students opened a second-story window. They helped one performer inside, then held out ladders, taken from their bunk beds, so the rest could follow. When all were safely inside, one of the actors slowly lowered the window curtain.



## ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT

THEATER: WITHOUT WALLS FESTIVAL



# Where All the World's a Stage

BY ZACHARY PINCUS-ROTH

**A CAR, A GARDEN PATH,** a basketball court, a garage. Audiences at La Jolla Playhouse's Without Walls Festival in San Diego last week weren't short of venue options. Some watched Anton Chekhov's "Three Sisters" on a tennis court. Others experienced "Hurling," a performance designed for one audience member at a time, on the roof of the University of California San Diego's engineering school.

Theater staged in the real world can be a jolting experience, but WoW Festival organizers hoped the unusual locations of its 22 site-specific shows would heighten the storytelling. "It's getting people off this fact that they're supposed to 'get it.' That there's a singular idea," said Liz Lerman, director of "Healing Wars," a dance show that had audiences wander backstage before the show to witness vignettes set during the Civil War. "It's truer to life."

While immersive theater isn't new, especially to Europeans, it's been gaining steam in the U.S. over the past few

years. The trend is influenced by shows like the New York hit "Sleep No More," a mashup of "Macbeth" and Hitchcock in which audiences wear masks and follow performers around a Chelsea warehouse.

"The demand for it is immense right now," said Christopher Ashley, artistic director of La Jolla Playhouse. "It rhymes with Facebook and Twitter and Instagram and all this stuff that's instantaneous community-building."

The biennial festival, held over three days last weekend, is a feat to produce. "It's a game of Tetris," said Marika Fitzgerald, the festival's associate producer. Organizers must coordinate foot traffic to venues spread across the UCSD campus and playhouse grounds, figure out how to route electricity to the sites and keep sound design from bleeding.

Holding shows in spaces typically reserved for other purposes brings its



WoW Festival focuses on immersive theater, like this tennis-court version of "Three Sisters."

COURTESY OF THEATRE WITHOUT WALLS; PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY M. HARRIS



Top left, Strange Fruit's 'The Spheres'; below left, 'The Bitter Game.'

trees and a crew cleared away weak limbs.

But perhaps the greatest hazard—and often the greatest joy—of site-specific shows is coming into contact with unsuspecting outsiders. The 2013 festival featured a wordless, improvisational show called "Kamchatka," in which performers wandered the UCSD campus as the audience tagged along. At one performance, the troupe climbed the walls of a dorm, and students let them in through a window.

At another, they knocked on the door of a bus, hinting that they might get on board. The driver called the police.

Some proposed pieces are just too difficult to stage. Mr. Ashley considered one show that had the audience join the

cast in a mud pit. Another idea involved a performer and audience member strapped to each other while sky diving.

But sometimes ambition pays off. One of the more innovative works at this year's festival was "Ojo," by the Pittsburgh-based Bricolage. As audience members arrived at the venue, they handed over "boarding passes" at what appeared to be an airline counter. They were then blindfolded and taken for a sensory walk through streets where the air smelled of curry, chickens pecked at their legs and fabric peddlers aggressively sold their wares.

"A lot of these artists think about the audience as the other character," Mr. Ashley said. This kind of work, he added, "says 'Please don't be passive and sit there and give us a golf clap at the end. You're part of the experience. What you do matters.'"

own problems. The opera "Queen of Carthage," for example, was held in a grove of eucalyptus trees overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Though beautiful, eucalyptuses can topple easily, so an arborist was called in to inspect the





"The Spheres" by Australia's Strange Fruit, part of La Jolla Playhouse's Without Walls 2015 Festival. (Photo by Daniel Norwood)

## Beyond the Comfort Zone at the WoW and BOSSS Festivals

Site-specific theatre festivals from La Jolla Playhouse and En Garde Arts make audiences work for their theatre—and it's worth it.

By Diep Tran  
November 3, 2015

**LA JOLLA, CALIF. and NEW YORK CITY:** Rule No. 1 when going to an outdoor site-specific theatre festival: Check the weather. You never know when it might be 100 degrees outside and you'll need bottles and bottles of water. Or when it's a cloudy week and there's been a storm brewing in Florida, which will cause organizers to postpone the festival.

Just ask Anne Hamburger, the president/producer of En Garde Arts, whose first-ever biennial [BOSSS Festival](#) (which stands for "big outdoor site-specific stuff") had to be postponed in early October. The reason: It was scheduled to take place at Hudson River Park and Hurricane Joaquin was coming in that weekend. "We're just watching the weather report and all of a sudden it goes from drizzle on Friday, rain on Saturday, nice on Sunday, to it's got a name," she recalled, sitting in her midtown Manhattan office. "The minute a storm has a name, it's bad!"

Despite the setback, Hamburger was able to reschedule the festival for two weeks later, Oct. 23–25, without losing a single production out of the nine-play lineup. The works at BOSSS were each 30 minutes in length and custom-made for the festival. Full disclosure: I was able to catch only seven out of the nine shows. I missed the last one because the weather dropped from a sunny 60 degrees to 40 degrees, with frigid winds coming in from the Hudson River. Mental note: When seeing outdoor shows outside on a fall evening in New York City, pack gloves.



For [La Jolla Playhouse](#) artistic director Christopher Ashley, the exact opposite was true for the second biennial [Without Walls Festival](#), which ran Oct. 9–11. It was hotter than expected: 100 degrees, which prompted sunscreen instead of gloves. Twenty-two works were on the bill—some created for the festival, others imported—with run times ranging from 30 minutes to two hours.

“It’s very rare that you get rained out in San Diego,” Ashley said while sitting in his office, a baseball cap protecting his head from the intense California sun. “Except for when it’s 100 degrees, it’s usually very beautiful outside.”

I am going to come right out and admit it: I am the queen of theatre binging. And I have the numbers to prove it. Over the course of two days this fall, at WoW, I was in the audience for 12 shows, and the 13th show, which I hadn’t planned on seeing, I ran into twice, as it was taking place in the courtyard outside of La Jolla Playhouse and I had to walk by it to make other curtain times. Two weeks later at BOSSS, I witnessed seven works over six hours.

All of the shows at both events were billed as site-specific. In other words, they were, for the most part, in nontraditional theatre spaces—a car, a grove of trees, a carousel—and, if you’re a dedicated theatre binger like me, you had to walk from show to show. Some shows at the WoW Festival required you to go catch a shuttle because they were not within walking distance; or you could take inspiration from the stage managers at the BOSSS Festival and travel between shows on bicycle.

Which brings us to Rule No. 2 of attending site-specific theatre: Wear comfortable shoes, because you will be walking not just from show to show but *during* the show. Just take *OjO: The Next Generation of Travel*, from the Pittsburgh-based [Bricolage Production Company](#), which played at the WoW Festival. During the performance, audiences walked outside through mulch and grass. In fact, the e-mail sent to audiences before the show was clear to specify the wearing of “closed-toe/comfortable shoes.”

Of course, some people don’t read e-mails. “On Friday night, the board president came in six-inch heels,” said Bricolage artistic director Jeffrey Carpenter, who also acted in *OjO*. “And she actually was a trouper: She walked through the mulch. We had to peel her off at a certain point because she wasn’t going to make it through the grass.”



“OjO” by Bricolage Production Company, part of La Jolla Playhouse’s Without Walls 2015 Festival. (Photo by Daniel Norwood)



**Seeing these works inspire the same exclamations the festival names denote (“wow” and “boss”).** One such “wow” moment came during *The Car Plays: Interchange* from [Moving Arts](#) at WoW, during which I sat in a car with one other audience member and watched two actors physically fight inches away from us.

The piece was comprised of 15 different 10-minute plays, each of which took place in separate cars. The plays were grouped around a specific theme—murder, love, a traffic accident—with five plays in each group; pairs of audience members were assigned to one thematic group and watched five of the works. (You would need to come back to see all the plays.) The sequence I saw was a “C.S.I.”-esque murder mystery, where audience members slowly pieced together the details of the crime and those involved. The playwrights in the “murder row” included Bekah Brunstetter and Jeff Liu.

“What’s been so fun is watching the audience leave,” said director Paul Stein. “They’re leaving the stage and they’re actually talking, ‘Oh yeah, she’s the younger version of that character!’ They’re talking more about the show than about the event [of seeing a play in a car].”

A particular “boss” moment came during *Moms* by Sarah Delappe at BOSSS. A tribute to motherhood, the play had 20 men walk around Hudson River Park with pink strollers, chanting, “I am a mom.” At the piece’s climax, the men were lying on the concrete in labor, and their screams attracted casual parkgoers who stopped to take in the sight (and capture some photos and videos). Right in the middle of labor, a jogger (not a part of the show) ran through the scene. The audience burst into rapturous applause.

For director Lee Sunday Evans, whose piece *This Place* was about the fisheries and fisherman that used to operate on the Hudson River, giving the audience a little bit of unexpected theatre magic—and inspiring them to see city locations in a new light—was part of the fun of BOSSS. In fact, for artists creating work for the festival, the criteria that Hamburger gave were: “I want you to think big, I want you to think outdoors, and I want you to make work for strangers.”

Wonder can happen anywhere, and any place can be theatre—whether it’s the inside of a car or on a pier by the river. “The idea that someone would come and not have any context is essentially the thing that’s most exciting to me about this endeavor,” said Evans. “There’s a kind of wonder that can happen when someone gets a little nugget of a creative gift that shakes up their day or changes their perception of what that place could be.”

The works at BOSSS were completely free, while at WoW, the most expensive ticket was \$29, with a variety of free programming for those who couldn’t afford a ticket. And considering most of the works at the festivals were in outdoor communal areas, ticketing would have been a time- and-labor-intensive endeavor.

At WoW, the decision to make the work free or cheap has attracted that rare theatre audience: the young. “I would say the audience for this is younger, more ethnically and economically diverse than anything else that we do,” said Ashley. “There’s virtually no pricing obstacle for most people.”



Social media also helped attract new audiences. In a time when Patti LuPone grabbing an audience member's cell phone can make national headlines, BOSSS and WoW set themselves apart by not just allowing the performances to be Instagrammed and tweeted out but actively encouraging it. A show program at WoW read: "We welcome you to take video and photographs during the performances." And I did take some photos: of the late-night acrobatic show *The Spheres* from [Australia's Strange Fruit](#) and *Moms* at BOSSS (so did many other people using the hashtag [#WoWFestSD](#) and [#bosssfes](#)).

"In this kind of world, you're part of the experience, the rules are *way* more relaxed and everybody ends up posting it and communicating it to their circle of friends much more effortlessly and naturally," said Ashley.

**The best show at WoW was one I didn't see.** Instead, it was one that I smelled, listened to, and touched. In Bricolage's *OjO* ("eye" in Spanish), I was blindfolded and taken on a trip to Mumbai, where the sound of the street bustle hit my ears, where curry tingled my nose (and made my stomach growl), and a chicken ran past my bare leg, making me flinch. At one point, I was at a bass-heavy dance party and someone grabbed my hand and asked me to dance.

Hand-holding was a requirement in *OjO*, where blinded audience members needed guidance so they didn't fall over. During a brief moment where the 10 of us were allowed to see, performer Ann Lapidus, who was born with sight and then gradually became blind, asked an audience member to take her hand and lead her to the table in the center of the room. With no hesitation, a woman stepped up and took her hand. "We're dating now," Lapidus responded playfully.

"They've just been through that experience where their hand was held, so I think people want to be protective," Lapidus said when we talked after the performance. "They've just had that experience where they know that someone who can't see needs that little extra attention. They have a little more empathy for that situation and want to be more helpful."

Whether holding hands or making conversation with a complete stranger, BOSSS and WoW fostered a sense of community. It goes beyond putting people in a dark room, having them sit in a row of chairs, and then ushering them out at an appointed time. Site-specific work forces audience members to encounter both the work and the people around them.

During an 8:15 performance of *Night, Janitor, Carousel* by Julian Koster (of the band Neutral Milk Hotel) at the carousel in Hudson River Park, Koster invited half of the audience to come aboard the carousel. A toddler in a white puffy jacket jumped off her seat in excitement. The play was a dream-like journey into the minds of a janitor, played by Koster, who sang and told stories about his great grandfather.

Upon entering the carousel, each person was given a lantern with a piece of paper attached to it. Koster told the audience to write down a memory, and the pieces of paper were collected and placed in a fishbowl filled with water. He then swirled the mixture, dissolving the paper until it turned into one big bowl of collective memory.

As an audience member, it's rare that you're physically exerting yourself as much as the actors on the stage. But that visceral sense of forcing audiences to take a literal journey and reaching the other side with a new set of eyes (so to speak) is what informs site-specific and/or immersive work.



“There’s an interest in the reconfiguration of storytelling—of which site-specific work is a part, of which immersive work is a part, of which multimedia work is a part,” said Hamburger. “That’s really at the essence of all of this. And I’m really interested in that. Storytelling is very different now, and there’s a more rapid conveyance of information going on. And then it becomes, storytelling for who? And that’s where I’m at—storytelling for peers, storytelling for the general public, storytelling for other artists. Who and why are we telling these stories?”

Whether it’s dancing blindly, sitting in a car with a stranger, riding a dolphin on a carousel, or Instagramming a photo of 20 men with pink strollers, there’s a particular sense of *now* within the works at WoW and BOSS. The play is an event that can’t be replicated in the exact same way again. The afternoon light won’t look the same. It will be a different stranger’s hand that you’re holding, a different patch of grass that you’re sitting on, or a different vantage point from which you’re viewing the play.

What’s more, the setting where you saw the play won’t look the same after you see a site-specific performance there. The carousel will never just be the Hudson River Park carousel again, but the place where you and 60 other audience members made a memory in a fishbowl together.

When theatre is this memorable and fun, who needs air conditioning or gloves?

\* \* \*



# Theater



Immersive *Natasha*: the audience gets dinner with a twist

Actors weave through the crowd and get up close and personal

## Total Immersion. In more new shows, the passive theatergoer is passé

By Richard Zoglin

MAKING A MUSICAL OUT OF *WAR AND Peace* might seem like a fool's errand. All those pages. All those subplots. All those Russian names. *Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812*, Dave Malloy's cheeky pop-rock version of (at least a portion of) Tolstoy's novel, helps out on the name front with a cute opening number that introduces the characters with primer-like directness ("Helene's a slut, Anatole's hot, Sonya's good..."). The show gets playgoers into the mood by seating them at tables in a faux Russian supper club and feeding them borscht and blini. And it scatters the action everywhere: on ribbonlike stages that snake through the club, in the aisles, even right at your table.

Immersive theater is suddenly the rage, and no passive theatergoer is safe. Along with *Natasha, Pierre* (housed in a Manhattan tent), *Here Lies Love*, David Byrne's terrific new musical about Imelda Marcos, is staged on a disco floor, with the audience herded about to make way for constantly morphing stages. In *Then She Fell*, an enchanting interactive show inspired by *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, just 15 audience members are led through three

floors of a Brooklyn building, given potions to drink, invited to tea and generally ordered about by a band of Lewis Carroll characters. Meanwhile, *Sleep No More*, from London's Punchdrunk theater company, is still going strong after two years, inviting guests to wander the elaborately appointed rooms of a decrepit Chelsea hotel, stumbling on actors miming *Macbeth*.

Even stodgy Broadway is having more interactive fun with the folks in the orchestra seats. Some shows, like last year's Tony-winning musical *Once* and this spring's *The Testament of Mary*, invite patrons onstage before the opening curtain—to explore the set, soak up the ambience and maybe belly up to the bar. Others, like Bette Midler's *I'll Eat You Last* and last season's *One Man, Two Guvnors*,

**Behold extreme theater: fresh, fun, totally absorbing, a full-contact sport with no rules and no boundaries**

pull audience members onstage for some (purportedly) unscripted repartee.

Across the U.S., meanwhile, regional companies are experimenting with site-specific shows that get audiences out of the theater and into the action. So far this spring there have been plays staged in an Ikea store (Theater 4 in New Haven, Conn.) and a lingerie shop (Fishtank Theater in Kansas City, Mo.), and St. Louis' OnSite Theatre is about to open one in a laundromat. In October, San Diego's La Jolla Playhouse will present a whole week-end of site-specific shows in its Without Walls festival. Among the highlights: *We Built This City*, in which audience members build a model city out of cardboard boxes, and *The Car Plays*, a series of 15 two-character playlets, staged in 15 different cars and viewed by two audience members at a time, rotating from car to car.

These immersive shows are "redefining the relationship between the audience and the theater," says La Jolla Playhouse artistic director Christopher Ashley. They're also making theatergoing more of an event—a unique live experience that simply can't be duplicated on the movie screen or the computer. It's no accident that the immersive movement is happening at a time when nearly every other popular art form—movies, recorded music, TV—is battling for survival against the Internet. One thing the Web can never replace is the live-theater experience, something immersive shows underscore vividly.

To be sure, there's some gimmickry going on, and *immersive* has become a buzzword attached to practically any show in which an actor talks to the audience or patrons sit at tables rather than in seats. *Natasha, Pierre* and *Here Lies Love* are two of the best off-Broadway musicals in years—but less because of their staging stunts than for their first-rate, rock-fueled scores, perfectly matched to story and setting. And the one thing you may well miss after a trip down the rabbit hole of *Then She Fell* or through the gothic fun house of *Sleep No More* is what, exactly, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Macbeth* are about.

But this is extreme theater: fresh, fun, totally absorbing, a full-contact sport with no rules and no boundaries. Borscht is optional. ■



The San Diego Union-Tribune

**01-07**  
OCTOBER

**Weekly  
Entertainment  
Guide**

**NIGHT + DAY**

**N + D**



**OUTSIDE THE BOX**

La Jolla Playhouse's  
Without Walls Festival takes  
theater to unconventional places

**NIGHT:** SLEEP  
TRAIN HOSTS  
KASKADE **8**

**DAY:** SAN DIEGO  
MAKER FAIRE AT  
BALBOA PARK **24**



# COVER STORY



BY  
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## TIP OF THE WEEK

CLICKING ON "PLAN  
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AT WOWFESTIVAL.ORG  
TAKES YOU TO A DE-  
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ROUNDUP OF EACH  
DAY'S FESTIVAL EVENTS.

## WITHOUT WALLS > FESTIVAL

**When:** All day/evening Oct.  
9-11; check with theater  
for specific performance  
times/locations.

**Where:** La Jolla Playhouse/  
UC San Diego Theatre  
District, 2910 La Jolla Village  
Drive

**Tickets:** Free to \$29  
**Phone:** (858) 550-1010  
**Online:** wowfestival.org



From left: John Diaz, Trystan Loucado and Ariana Siegel in San Diego Dance Theater's "Dances With Walls." JIM CARMODY

# BREAKING BARRIERS

SECOND WITHOUT WALLS FESTIVAL PUTS NEW FOCUS ON LOCAL ARTISTS, FAMILY-FRIENDLY PROGRAMMING

**W**hen its second edition opens Oct. 9, La Jolla Playhouse's sprawling celebration of immersive and site-specific performances will once again showcase works that can't be hemmed in by theater convention.

But it turns out that compared with the inaugural 2013 event, this year's Without Walls Festival is knocking down a few barriers of its own.

For 2015, WoW has more or less opened the floodgates to locally based artists, hosting a raft of projects from San Diego theater and dance companies and artists.

Not that they weren't welcome before. But in 2013, says Playhouse artistic director Christopher Ashley, the festival received only six proposals from locals. This year: 48.

And for WoW 2.0, he says, there's also an extra emphasis on keeping events accessible and affordable.

That stems partly from the success of such 2013 WoW offerings as "Seafoam Sleepwalk," an all-comers event that unfolded on the beach at La Jolla Shores.

"The first festival had a couple of free pieces that were really public art," Ashley says. "And really,

the audience doubled every time we did them.

"Clearly there's a hunger for publicly accessible art. So a lot more of the festival is free. We've really made a conscious choice to be sure cost isn't an obstacle."

Plenty else about the three-day fest will remain familiar to those who attended in 2013. There'll be a free Festival Village with live music, food trucks and other entertainment.

Once again, there'll also be a Family Day (Oct. 10) with kid-minded performances and hands-on fun.

Even some of the programming is making an encore, such as the perennially popular "Car Plays" — short works that take place inside actual vehicles.

And international artists remain a strong presence: In fact, the festival opens Oct. 9 with the visual spectacle "The





## Family fun

The WoW Festival's Family Day (Oct. 10) features events and activities hosted by the San Diego Children's Discovery Museum, the Museum of Photographic Arts, the Timken Museum of Art and the Mingei International Museum. It also will feature a live action role-play event, offering kids ages 8 and up a chance to join an exclusive Society of Creative Thinkers.

The broader WoW Festival will feature numerous free, family-friendly productions, including Animal Cracker Conspiracy's "Gnomesense! A Puppet Happening in the Garden," Fern Street Circus' "The Adventures of Heartman," and "Seven Butterflies," plus hands-on activities both Oct. 10 and 11, including an art garden and a fort-building program.

Cellist Jennifer Bewerse will perform "Seven Butterflies" for the festival.

Spheres," presented by the Australian troupe Strange Fruit on the outdoor Mark Taper Plaza.

Overall, "I think there's a hunger for the unexpectedness and surprise of this kind of work," says Ashley. "And the fact the work puts the audience right at the center of the action — it follows the logic much more of a party, or in some cases a flash mob, than it does traditional theater."

Ashley even makes a connection between the rise of social media (and its sense of curating one's life experience for the consideration of others) and the way that WoW blurs boundaries between art and audience.

As he puts it: "Everybody's an actor in their own drama."

## Four to look for

**"Healing Wars":** Liz Lerman conceived, directed and choreographed this piece, a West Coast premiere that serves as the fest's centerpiece (and runs through Oct. 25). The

immersive, multimedia show explores how soldiers and healers cope with the physical and psychological wounds of war.

**"The Car Plays: Interchange":** The inventive series of "dashboard dramas"

returns — but this time, the program will consist of 10-minute works that share common storylines and characters (instead of being stand-alone pieces).

**"OJO: The Next Generation of Travel":** Pittsburgh's

Bricolage Production Company stages this West Coast premiere that takes participants on a 75-minute journey and explores both the festival location and "the world of the senses," via various but unspecified modes of transport.

(Buckle your seat belts.)

**"A Flock of Flyers":** The family-friendly show (a West Coast premiere) from Toronto's CORPUS centers on a Canadian flying squadron that has to make do without any planes. (Amusement ensues.)

## Local lights

**"The Bitter Game":** This Playhouse-commissioned solo piece by UC San Diego MFA candidate Keith Wallace, directed by faculty member Deborah Stein, "blends verse, prose and more into a stirring commentary that begs the question, what does it mean to survive while black in America?"

**"Heaven on Earth":** San Diego's venerable, ever-bold

Sledgehammer Theatre, which has its roots at UC San Diego, returns with Charles Mee's vivid, apocalypse-minded "Heaven on Earth," a site-specific presentation around the Powell Structural Lab.

**"Dances With Walls":** Jean Isaacs' San Diego Dance Theater is staging this world-premiere piece, encompassing three dances that take place against unyielding surfaces in different campus locations. (Tour guides will usher audi-

ences of 100 people at a time through the 45-minute experience; attendees are encouraged to take photos and share on social media.)

**"Refuse or The Golden Door":** This world premiere from Ion Theatre was originally part of the Hillcrest company's own season. The piece has Ion partnering with members of San Diego's refugee population for an interactive theater experience focusing on their struggles and resiliency.



UC San Diego MFA candidate Keith Wallace will present "The Bitter Game." JIM CARMODY