

LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCES NEW DIGITAL WITHOUT WALLS (WOW) PROJECTS BY MARIKE SPLINT AND ANIMAL CRACKER CONSPIRACY

FOURTH WALKS OF LIFE EPISODE FROM BLINDSPOT COLLECTIVE ADDED FOCUSING ON BLACK ARTISTS AND EXPERIENCES

THE WIZARDS OF OAKWOOD DRIVE EXTENDED THROUGH AUGUST 30; DATES SET FOR DAVID ISRAEL REYNOSO'S PORTALEZA: SEPT 8 – OCT 4

La Jolla, CA – La Jolla Playhouse is pleased to announce two more world-premiere productions in its [Digital Without Walls \(WOW\) series](#), including *You Are Here: A Homebound Travelogue*, a Playhouse commission by LA-based artist **Marike Splint** (2017 WOW Festival's *Among Us*), and *The Society of Wonder*, a Playhouse commission by the San Diego-based **Animal Cracker Conspiracy** (*Paper Cities*; 2015 WOW Festival's *Gnomesense*), both launching in September.

The Playhouse also announces a fourth *Walks of Life* episode from its 2020/2021 Resident Theatre **Blindspot Collective** (2019 WOW Festival's *Hall Pass*) that focuses on Black artists and experiences. The episode will include four world-premiere audio plays: *Nursing Hours* by Penny Middleton; *Punch Bowl Spaces* by Kian Kline-Chilton; *The Piano* by Richard Allen and Taran Gray; and *Family Sound* by Michael Mitchell, Aurin Squire and Anastasia Victory. Launching in late August, the episode will be directed by Kandace Crystal and Lamar Perry and will feature original spoken word by Sherehe Hollins, sound design by Melanie Chen Cole and original music/additional sound design by Chesney Snow.

Due to popular demand, the Playhouse's Digital WOW production of *The Wizards of Oakwood Drive*, by Tom Salamon (*Accomplice*), has been extended, with performances now running three times daily on Saturdays and Sundays through **August 30**. Additionally, run dates for the Playhouse's previously-announced Digital WOW production of *Portaleza*, by **David Israel Reynoso** (WOW Festival's *Las Quinceañeras* and *Waking La Llorona*; Off-Broadway's *Sleep No More*) will be **September 8 – October 4**. Tickets for both productions are available at LaJollaPlayhouse.org.

"We're delighted to welcome back acclaimed Playhouse artists Marike Splint and Animal Cracker Conspiracy, who have developed fascinating new video projects for our Digital WOW series: one that forges a path to connection through an inventive Google Earth expedition; the other a modern allegory brought to life through ACC's signature virtuosic puppetry," said **Christopher Ashley**, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse. "It is also a privilege to commission Blindspot Collective to create a fourth *Walks of Life* episode, written and performed entirely by Black artists, in a tribute to the Black Lives Matter movement."

You Are Here: A Homebound Travelogue, created by renowned immersive artist Marike Splint (2017 WOW Festival's *Among Us*), with media design by Hana S. Kim and sound and music by Jonathan Snipes, takes audiences on a road trip around the world in Google Earth, offering a visual experience that leads down the forgotten roads of our personal geographies, the back alleys of our memory, and the highways to places we long to be. This world-premiere video project will be available to stream in September at LaJollaPlayhouse.org

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A group of visionaries called **The Society of Wonder** once discovered that every backyard contains a secret portal to an underground kingdom of inspiration and hope. But that was long ago, before the monolithic Xebos Corporation brought our natural world to the brink of collapse. When five seemingly unrelated characters begin to receive mysterious signs from an enigmatic Cyborg, it's up to them to decipher the clues before all is lost. Will the Society rise again? Award-winning San Diego-based puppetry company Animal Cracker Conspiracy presents this whimsical six-part series of videos, launching in September, that will transport audiences to a unique world that looks uncannily like our own.

Blindspot Collective's fourth **Walks of Life** episode focuses on Black artists and experiences. Although previous episodes featured Black playwrights and performers, this moment of national reckoning and recognition necessitates a creative rebuke to systemic oppression, and a proclamation that Black lives not only matter, they are essential. This new episode features four short plays that celebrate Black culture and community through dialogue, spoken word, soundscape and original music. When the world witnessed the murder of George Floyd in less than ten minutes, it was a symbolic culmination of over 400 years of Black death and trauma in the United States. Each scene in is roughly ten minutes long as a means of reflecting the vibrancy, beauty, culture and excellence that are possible in that same amount of time. *Walks of Life* is an original, Playhouse-commissioned work of auditory theatre featuring original short scenes by playwrights and composers from across the country that imagine the lives of people in the homes and apartments we pass while walking independently through our neighborhoods.

Much like the notion of sending a message in a bottle, **Portaleza** (derived from the words "portal" and "fortaleza," meaning strength/fortress) is a one-of-a-kind digital WOW experience created by David Israel Reynoso of Optika Moderna (WOW Festival productions of *Las Quinceañeras*, *Waking La Llorona*) that explores ideas of connection through desperate means of correspondence. After booking a visit with Optika Moderna's strange opticians, patrons will be mailed a mysterious package, which is to remain sealed until their appointed time. When the moment arrives, guests will discover that the humble contents of this parcel hold the key to unlocking a reality beyond their realm of imagination; a customized experience in response to what they do next. The piece will run September 8 – October 4.

The Wizards of Oakwood Drive offers a live, Zoom-connected performance for up to 10 kids at a time that tells the story of two sibling wizards in an all-out, winner-take-all magic spell contest. With a little help from parents to set the stage, the wizards take participants on a treasure hunt around your own home, finding items in hidden locations in a one-of-a-kind interactive experience sure to delight your kids. The piece has now been extended to run Saturdays and Sundays through August 30.

These projects join the previously-announced Digital WOW productions of **Ancient**, by San Diego-based artists Mike Sears and Lisa Berger (2019 WOW Festival's *How High the Moon*); **Binge**, by UK-based artist Brian Lobel (2013 WOW Festival's *Carpe Minuta Prima*), **Show Me A Good Time**, by the Berlin-based Gob Squad (2017 WOW Festival's *Super Night Shot*); and **The Totally Fake Latino News with Culture Clash**, by Culture Clash (*American Night*, *Zorro in Hell*).

Since its inception in 2011, **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, site-inspired and digital works that venture beyond the physical confines of the Playhouse facilities. Over the last decade, the Playhouse has commissioned and presented a series of immersive and site-based productions at locations throughout the San Diego community, including *Susurrus* (2011), *The Car Plays: San Diego* (2012), *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), *What Happens Next* (2018), and four biennial WOW Festivals in 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2019.

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About the Artists

San Diego-based artists Bridget Rountree and Iain Gunn are **Animal Cracker Conspiracy (ACC)**, a contemporary hybrid puppet company invested in peering under the surface of things and pushing the boundaries of kinetic performance. Joining forces in 2004, they create performances that aim to de-center expectations, open new avenues of thought, and invoke the uncanny. Their ongoing practice is based on a shared interest and exploration of where fine art, puppetry, performance art, physical theater, film and mixed media intersect. Traversing abstractions of movement from the material to the immaterial, folk to contemporary, and intellectual to intuitive, ACC actively cultivates the suspension of disbelief by embracing the unknown and using the manipulation of puppets to create original stories. Past work includes: *Adrift*, *Myth Project 1*, *Paper Cities Project*, *The Collector*, *Desire to Fly* and many others. ACC has participated in numerous national and international artist residencies, conferences, exhibitions and workshops at such institutions as La Jolla Playhouse, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, ArtPower, and the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center. They have received support from the San Diego Foundation, Jim Henson Foundation, Puffin Foundation, Guthman Foundation, Sator Arts Foundation, Synergy Arts Foundation, the Heather Beth Henson Fund and The Puppet Slam Network.

Blindspot Collective develops radically inclusive programming that cultivates new work, emerging artists, and diverse audiences. The company develops transformative theatre that amplifies marginalized voices, illuminates untold stories, and energizes vulnerable communities in San Diego County. Since its founding in 2017, Blindspot Collective has collaborated with La Jolla Playhouse, The Old Globe; California Center for the Arts, Diversionary Theatre; ARTS (A Reason to Survive); UC San Diego and other community partners to develop projects that meaningfully engage audiences and artists in the blindspot of society. The organization centers equity, inclusion, and pressing social issues in its work on and off stage with collaborators that include San Diego Unified School District, Juvenile Court and Community Schools, Cajon Valley Union School District, and Live Well San Diego. Most recently, Blindspot Collective was the first theatre company to be awarded a performing arts residency at the San Diego International Airport, where the organization developed and presented site-specific performances in 2019. The company has received acclaim for its original work, including *Hall Pass*, an immersive musical featured in the 2019 Without Walls Festival; *Qullili*, a documentary play based on the stories of local refugees developed with support from the Critical Refugee Studies Collective; *The Magic in this Soul*, a verbatim play about discrimination and resilience that won the Audience Favorite Award at the 2018 San Diego International Fringe Festival; and *Untold*, another verbatim play about mental illness that won the Dunn-Rankin Award for New Work at the 2017 San Diego Fringe. The company also develops interactive Forum Theatre for youth audiences, including *Safa's Story* and *Danny's Story*, which allow young people to consider the complexities of difference and prejudice. Those two productions have been seen by over 12,000 students in the past two years.

David Israel Reynoso is a scenic/costume designer and the creator, with Optika Moderna, of La Jolla Playhouse's acclaimed Without Walls Festival productions of *Las Quinceañeras* (2019) and *Waking La Llorona* (2017). Other Playhouse designs include: *Queens*, *At the Old Place*, *Tiger Style!*, *Healing Wars*, *The Darrell Hammond Project* and *Kingdom City*. He is also recognized locally for his designs of The Old Globe's *Ebenezer Scrooge's Big San Diego Christmas Show*, *As You Like It*, *The Tempest*, *The Wanderers*, *tokyo fish story*, *Twelfth Night*, *Arms and the Man*, *Water by the Spoonful* and *Time and the Conways*, among others. The Obie Award-winning costume designer of *Sleep No More* (New York and Shanghai), Mr. Reynoso's other selected work includes: *Hamlet* at ACT and *Futurity*, *Cabaret*, *The Snow Queen*, *Alice vs. Wonderland* at ART. He is the recipient of the Creative Catalyst Grant of The San Diego Foundation, an Elliot Norton Award, a Craig Noel Award nomination and multiple IRNE and BroadwayWorld Award nominations.

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[Marike Splint](#) is a Dutch French-Tunisian theater maker based in Los Angeles, specializing in creating site-responsive work that explores the relationship between people, places and identity. She has created performances in sites ranging from a bus driving through the streets of a city, to wide open meadows, taxicabs, train stations, beach piers, subways and hotel rooms. Presenters of her original work include La Jolla Playhouse's 2017 WOW Festival (*Among Us*), UCLA Center for the Art of Performance, Skirball Cultural Center, Metro Art Los Angeles (USA); Oerol Festival, Theaterfestival Boulevard (The Netherlands); Urbane Kuenste Ruhr (Germany); GeoAIR (Tbilisi, Georgia); Anciens Abattoirs de Casablanca (Morocco). Splint received a BA in philosophy from the University of Amsterdam and an MFA in directing from Columbia University. Among other awards, she is the recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship and a Columbia University Merit Fellowship. She was nominated as a finalist for the 2019 Center Theater Group Sherwood Award for exceptional contributions to the Los Angeles theatre landscape as an innovative and adventurous artist. She serves as a faculty member in the Department of Theater at UCLA.

La Jolla Playhouse is a place where artists and audiences come together to create what's new and next in the American theatre, from Tony Award-winning productions, to imaginative programs for young audiences, to interactive experiences outside our theatre walls. Founded in 1947 by Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire and Mel Ferrer, the Playhouse is currently led by Tony Award winner Christopher Ashley, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse, and Managing Director Debby Buchholz. The Playhouse is internationally renowned for the development of new plays and musicals, including mounting 105 world premieres, commissioning 52 new works, and sending 33 productions to Broadway – including the hit musical *Come From Away* – garnering a total of 38 Tony Awards, as well as the 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre.

La Jolla Playhouse Digital Without Walls (WOW) Projects

Ancient

By Mike Sears and Lisa Berger
La Jolla Playhouse Commission
Launched on May 26; Free

This Playhouse-commissioned video installation explores the relationship between repetition and meditation, the routine and the ancient. With an original score composed by Shawn Rohlf for cello, piano and guitar, text by Rainer Maria Rilke, and a company of nine actors, *Ancient* invites the audience to observe an unfolding of day-to-day tasks that have been in play for centuries. An opportunity to experience nothing happening -- and everything happening. A reminder that we have been here before and that somehow, we go on.

BINGE

By Brian Lobel & Friends
June 30 – July 12

This one-on-one performance piece takes the solitary experience of binge-watching television shows and transforms it into an opportunity to find comfort in the lives of fictional characters. Tailor-made to fit the life of each individual audience member, the performance offers a live Zoom session with a personal artist companion, resulting in the prescription of a classic television episode to provide a little bit of solace at home. Leave your own drama behind, and insert yourself into a world where whatever the drama, it'll probably be solved in under 30 minutes.

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Portaleza

By David Israel Reynoso/Optika Moderna
La Jolla Playhouse Commission
September 8 – October 4; \$20

Much like the notion of sending a message in a bottle, *Portaleza* (derived from the words "portal" and "fortaleza," meaning strength/fortress) is a one-of-a-kind digital WOW experience created by David Israel Reynoso of Optika Moderna (WOW Festival productions of *Las Quinceañeras*, *Waking La Llorona*) that explores ideas of connection through desperate means of correspondence. After booking a visit with Optika Moderna's strange opticians, patrons will be mailed a mysterious package, which is to remain sealed until their appointed time. When the moment arrives, guests will discover that the humble contents of this parcel hold the key to unlocking a reality beyond their realm of imagination; a customized experience in response to what they do next.

Show Me A Good Time

By Gob Squad
World premiere co-produced and co-commissioned with HAU Hebbel am Ufer (Berlin)
June 20, 2020; Free

Show Me A Good Time is a 12-hour, live-streamed international event that features nine performers streaming in all over Berlin – from inside an empty theatre, to private homes, to out on the city's streets– all combining into one live video. The show is set during the summer solstice at a moment when the pause button has been pressed on society, and everyone is stuck in a perpetual living selfie, staring at themselves on a filtered screen. Gob Squad artists reveal an alien world of habits, signs and symbols that once seemed to make sense but now only evokes a time already passed. Patrons can tune in for the full twelve hours or just check in periodically as Gob Squad marks each hour of the summer solstice in their signature improvisational style that blurs the boundaries of art, theatre and real life.

The Society of Wonder

By Animal Cracker Conspiracy
La Jolla Playhouse Commission
Six Episodes Launching in September; Free

A group of visionaries once called The Society of Wonder discovered that every backyard contains a secret portal to an underground kingdom of inspiration and hope. But that was long ago, before the monolithic Xebos Corporation brought our natural world to the brink of collapse. When five seemingly unrelated characters begin to receive mysterious signs from an enigmatic Cyborg, it's up to them to decipher the clues before all is lost. Will the Society rise again? Award-winning San Diego-based puppetry company Animal Cracker Conspiracy presents a whimsical series of videos that will transport you to a unique world that looks uncannily like our own.

The Totally Fake Latino News with Culture Clash

By Culture Clash
La Jolla Playhouse Commission
Six Episodes: June – August; Free

The iconic Culture Clash offers 10-minute doses of levity, poetics and payasadas (clowning) from their homes and streets of SoCal and beyond, courtesy of the Chicano/Latinx performance trio, Richard Montoya, Ric Salinas and Herbert Siguenza. Watch them chronicle the isolation, joys and gut-wrenching response to protests on the nation's streets against police brutality, as they stand in fierce support for Black Lives Matter.

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Walks of Life

By Blindspot Collective

La Jolla Playhouse Commission

Four Episodes: May – September; Free

Walks of Life is an original, Playhouse-commissioned work of auditory theatre featuring short scenes by playwrights and composers from across the country. In the midst of a pandemic that fractures and isolates our communities, this aural experience offers the opportunity to safely and imaginatively reconnect with each other by bearing witness to life's intimate moments captured entirely in sound. Participants experience the piece while walking independently through their own neighborhoods, and over the course of three 30-minute parts, they are introduced to characters and stories that might be unfolding in the homes around them.

The Wizards of Oakwood Drive

By Tom Salamon

La Jolla Playhouse Commission

July 16 – August 30; \$25

This live, Zoom-connected performance for 10 kids at a time tells the story of two sibling wizards in an all-out, winner-take-all magic spell contest. With a little help from parents to set the stage, the wizards take participants on a treasure hunt around your own home, finding items in hidden locations in a one-of-a-kind interactive experience sure to delight your kids.

You Are Here: A Homebound Travelogue

By Marike Splint

Production Design by Hana S. Kim; Sound & Music by Jonathan Snipes

La Jolla Playhouse Commission

September, 2020; Free

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