TALES OF JOY

‘FANDANGO FOR BUTTERFLIES (AND COYOTES)’ CELEBRATES IMMIGRANTS’ IMAGINATION, PERSEVERANCE AND HAPPINESS AT LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE 18

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Thanks to San Diego’s proximity to an international border, many of its local theaters have produced plays and musicals over the years about the immigrant experience.

But playwright Andrea Thome said that too many of the immigrant stories she has seen portrayed in the American media focus on their suffering and struggle. Her play “Fandango for Butterflies (and Coyotes),” which opens Tuesday in its West Coast premiere at La Jolla Playhouse, instead celebrates the strength, resilience and imagination of immigrants who come together one night for a fandango celebration at a New York community center.

Thome, whose parents are Chilean and Costa Rican-American, said immigrants do suffer in their journeys to America as well as their assimilation processes, but that’s just one piece of who they are. And fandangos — joyful multicultural gatherings of improvised song, dance and storytelling — celebrate immigrants’ bravery, triumph against the odds and their shared experience.

“I see immigration as a radicalization of imagination,” Thome said in a recent interview. “You have to imagine your life in a place you’ve never been, and you have to draw on that store of imagination to get you through what can be a very difficult journey for some people. Fandangos celebrate that imagination, creativity, community and solidarity.”

Produced by New York’s En Garde Arts, “Fandango for Butterflies (and Coyotes)” made its world premiere in February 2020 at the La Mama experimental theater club in Manhattan’s Bowery neighborhood. The show’s originally planned five borough city tour was interrupted by the pandemic, but it resumed last fall. Since then, the En Garde Arts production has traveled to Penn State and the University of Maryland. In keeping with En Garde’s site-specific ethos and the play’s subject matter, the La Jolla Playhouse run will be followed by a week of free shows at community centers in Chula Vista, San Ysidro, Escondido, Oceanside and more, as an outreach to the county’s immigrant communities.

Playhouse artistic director Christopher Ashley describes “Fandango” as a “warm and joyous show.”

“It’s a celebration of indomitable immigrant communities — people enthusiastically gathering to sing and share stories, even in the midst of a threat that lingers just outside their walls, underscoring humanity’s intrinsic need for connection,” Ashley said in a statement.

En Garde Arts was founded in 1986 by Anne Hamburger. In 1999, she closed En Garde to accept a position as artistic director of La Jolla Playhouse, but she left after just one year for a top creative post in Disney’s theme parks division. She returned to New York in 2008 and relaunched En Garde in 2014.

Thome said Hamburger reached out to her in spring 2017
Running Fandango Fronter–City. There’s also a long–America and New York ing Japan, Europe, South around the world, includ–munities have popped up temporary fandango com–culture in Veracruz, con–world–famous fandango There is a vibrant and artistic director. Padilla le–Sequential nature of fandango. The stories and score are bilingual, but live translations are projected onstage in both English and Spanish. And at the end of each performance, the audience is invited to join the fandango cast either onstage or outdoors, if they choose.

Thome said reactions to the show vary, depending up on the audience members’ personal experiences. “We see a lot of tears, a lot of laughter, and a lot of emotions about feeling represented,” she said. “There’s also a feeling of freedom afterward. The fandango allows you to free yourself.”

Pam Kragen, The San Diego Union-Tribune

Night & Day

Directory

Arts in the Park: A FREE family–focused, community event.
A full day of entertainment, music, dance, circus acts, art, food and kids activities. – August 27, 2022, 10 am - 5 pm, Memorial Park, 373 Park Way, Chula Vista, CA 91910, FREE. https://www.onstageplayhouse.org/arts-in-the-park

Holy Smoke, Deep Pit BBQ & Community Event: 55th Annual Join us on September 4th in the Cuyamaca Rancho State Park that borders Cleveland National Forest. The Best BBQ Plate $15, Kids $10. Beer Garden, Dancing, Shopping, Kids Games, Grampa’s Attic, More shopping, Raffle Hourly, Grand Prize $1,000 cash, Barbbie Band, Free Admission, Free Parking, lots of Fun for the whole family at bargain prices. (619)445-3620. – Labor Day Sunday September 4th, 11 AM to 5 PM, 9136 Riverside Dr. Descanso, CA 91916, Free Admission Free Parking. (619) 445-3620

Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra at The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park, San Diego Symphony

Music Director Rafael Payare leads the Orchestra in Tchaikovsky’s symphonic tone poem Francesca da Rimini that will have you gripping your seat, his fabulous Waltz and Polonaise from Eugene Onegin, and much more in this spectacular evening of symphonic storytelling.

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