

## LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCES INITIAL PROJECTS FOR 2023 WITHOUT WALLS (WOW) FESTIVAL

ACCLAIMED ANNUAL FESTIVAL OF IMMERSIVE AND SITE-INSPIRED WORK  
TO BE PRESENTED IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE SAN DIEGO SYMPHONY AT  
THE RADY SHELL AT JACOBS PARK™ APRIL 27 – 30

EVENT WILL BE FREE OF CHARGE AND FEATURE THRILLING PROJECTS BY LOCAL,  
NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS, PLUS NEW WORKS PERFORMED BY THE  
SAN DIEGO SYMPHONY, BLINDSPOT COLLECTIVE, TU YO THEATRE AND OTHER  
ACCLAIMED REGIONAL COMPANIES

La Jolla, CA – La Jolla Playhouse announces several initial projects for its **2023 Without Walls (WOW) Festival** of immersive and site-inspired work. Presented in association with the **San Diego Symphony**, the 2023 WOW Festival will take place **April 27 – 30, 2023** at **The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park**.

Like previous WOW Festivals, the 2023 event will feature four action-packed days of theatre, dance, music, puppetry, spectacle events, and more, with multiple performances by acclaimed local, national and international artists occurring throughout the weekend. All projects at the 2023 WOW Festival will be offered **free of charge**, with reservations recommended for select performances with limited capacity.

The WOW Festival at The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park will create a vibrant communal space where patrons can gather to experience WOW performances, engage in lively discussions about the work, and enjoy the food and drink options on offer at the Symphony's exciting bayside location.

Initial projects for the 2023 WOW Festival include: Ryan Carter's ***A Shared Space***, from the **San Diego Symphony**; ***Birdmen*** from The Netherlands' **Close-Act Theatre Company**; ***Circular Dimensions***, from Palm Springs artist **Cristopher Cichocki**; ***Choreo & Fly***, from San Diego's **DISCO RIOT**; Broadway veteran Sharon Wheatley's ***Drive***, from **Diversionsary Theatre**; ***The End***, from Denver's **Control Group Productions**; ***Las Cuatro Milpas***, from San Diego's **TuYo Theatre** (WOW Festival's *On Her Shoulders We Stand*); ***The NEST***, from St. Paul-based artist **Megan Flød Johnson**; and ***salty water***, from San Diego's **Blindspot Collective** (WOW Festival productions of *Black Séance* and *Hall Pass*). A complete roster of artists and projects will be announced in the coming weeks. For more information, please visit [wowfestival.org](http://wowfestival.org).

"The WOW Festival unites local, national and international artists and art lovers for four days of innovative, immersive and interactive events – all of which will be available free of charge," said **Christopher Ashley**, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse. "The festival has grown become one of the most highly-anticipated annual events – both locally and nationally – and we're delighted to be partnering with the San Diego Symphony to hold this year's event at The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park, where we can celebrate our community's adventurous spirit and rich cultural offerings."

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Launching alongside the WOW Festival will be **La Lucha**, a world-premiere immersive experience by award-winning designer **David Israel Reynoso** and his theatrical company **Optika Moderna** (WOW Festival productions of *Las Quinceañeras*, *Waking La Llorona*; Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More*). Presented in partnership with the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (MCASD), the piece will have previews April 27 – 30 at MCASD Downtown, 1100 Kettner Blvd. Inspired by Lucha Libre – where professional Mexican wrestlers use masks and high-flying maneuvers to astonish and captivate audiences – *La Lucha* transports audiences to a realm of ringside thrills and backstage secrets. For more information, please visit [LaJollaPlayhouse.org](http://LaJollaPlayhouse.org).

The Playhouse's signature **Without Walls (WOW)** series has become one of the region's most popular and acclaimed performance programs. Since its inception in 2011, the Playhouse has been commissioning and presenting this series of immersive, site-inspired and virtual productions throughout the San Diego community, including eight stand-alone productions, five WOW Festivals and fourteen Digital WOW pieces.

Founded in 1910, the **San Diego Symphony** is the oldest orchestra in California and one of the largest and most significant cultural organizations in San Diego. The Orchestra performs for more than 250,000 people each season, offering a wide variety of programming at its two much-loved venues, Copley Symphony Hall in downtown San Diego (now under renovation) and The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park on San Diego Bay. Music Director Rafael Payare leads the orchestra's 82 full-time musicians, graduates of the finest and most celebrated music schools in the United States and abroad. For more than 30 years, the San Diego Symphony has provided comprehensive learning and community engagement programs reaching more than 65,000 students annually and bringing innovative programming to San Diego's diverse neighborhoods and schools. For more information, visit [www.sandiegosymphony.org](http://www.sandiegosymphony.org).

**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 108 world premieres, commissioning 60 new works, and sending 33 productions to Broadway, garnering a total of 38 Tony Awards, as well as the 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre. Visit [www.LaJollaPlayhouse.org](http://www.LaJollaPlayhouse.org).

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WOW Festival Projects***A Shared Space***

Presented by the San Diego Symphony

What happens when the performance includes everyone? In *A Shared Space*, Ryan Carter transforms cell phones into instruments as the audience joins San Diego Symphony musicians as players in a communal performance that enhances our sense of togetherness. Using technology, *A Shared Space* is an experience that could not have existed 20 years ago, and puts the audience in control of their own experience – not only controlling the sounds of their own devices, but also the ability to cue the orchestra. Taking over the lawn at the Rady Shell at Jacobs Park, these immersive performances will bring people together to make music like never before.

***Birdmen***

**From Close-Act Theatre Company, The Netherlands**

Huge illuminated creatures roam the streets operated by mysterious men. Their movement and colors act synchronized as if they were programmed for a mission. Their illuminated bodies react on their environment. They are communication in colors. What is the benefit of futuristic men cooperating with a large ancient creature? They are looking for other species from our past but bring us closer the future. Close-Act Theatre brings strong visual street theatre in larger- than- life spectacles. Their works have been performed at renowned international theatre festivals and events all over the world. The shows are multidisciplinary, combine theatre, stilts, music, fire, dance, metal constructions and aerial objects and are always staged amongst the audience.

***Choreo & Fly***

**From DISCO RIOT, San Diego, CA**

*Choreo & Fly* is a performance plus an activity that allows for people to engage in something physical between short dance performances by local movement artists. This intersection of performance and participation creates a unique experience for local dance artists and audiences. *Choreo & Fly*, a unique combination of dance + kite-flying, is about engaging with meaningful opportunities to move our bodies, enjoy physical expression, and build community through movement.

***Circular Dimensions***

**From Cristopher Cichocki, Coachella Valley, CA**

*Circular Dimensions* is the audiovisual performance series of artist Cristopher Cichocki, who harnesses elements of the natural world and industrial mutation as primary mediums, alongside original compositions fused into his DJ sets that embrace sonic ambience and experimental dance genres. *Circular Dimensions* maps the surrounding environment with monumental video projections experienced in chroma-depth 3-D. At the 2022 Coachella Festival Cichocki showcased his 5-story tall *Circular Dimensions x Microscape*, constructed of 25,000 feet of PVC tubes. *Circular Dimensions* transforms in relationship from site-to-site, shifting through a diverse scope of ever-evolving installation environments. These experiences are amplified with spectacles of light, video mapping, haze, and sonic alchemy that embrace the surrounding nature and/or architecture with a multi-sensory symphony for the senses.

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***Drive*****From Diversionsary Theater, San Diego, CA**

This immersive theater experience is based on Broadway veteran Sharon Wheatley's (*Come From Away*) book *Drive*, which chronicles her real-life, pandemic-necessitated cross country RV trip with her wife and family. This humorous and heartwarming piece centers around a 30-foot RV as the two women struggle to set up a camp site, with tasks often interrupted by discussions of family, the loss working in live theater, and how to manage the great outdoors. Starring Wheatley and *Come From Away*'s Astrid Van Wieren, audiences will join them as they navigate their discovery of each other, ultimately learning to work together to find success and adventure in the bizarre summer of 2020.

***The-End*****From Control Group Productions, Denver, CO**

The immersive hijacking of a traditional civic bus tour takes audiences on a ride through a city transformed by escalating climate catastrophe, inexorably rolling toward the brink of collapse. *The-End* explores our city's present and futures, and seeks refuge from the rising storm, in an interactive expedition spanning multiple sites in a custom renovated apocalyptic school bus. Equal parts sublime artistry, civics lesson, summer camp, and sheer wild ride, *The-End* offers an entirely unique cultural adventure that will change how you see San Diego forever – or until the end, anyway...

***Las Cuatro Milpas*****From TuYo Theatre, San Diego, CA**

*Las Cuatro Milpas* is an immersive journey through a corn maze inspired by the local restaurant, Petra and Nati's Las Cuatro Milpas in Barrio Logan, that bridges ancient Aztec mythology with the American dream. Audiences enter a maze modeled on Aztec codices and covered in murals that tell the journey of the Estudillo family from Mexico to California. As they freely roam the maze, patrons can interact with story stations with interactive QR codes and audio tracks to experience segments of the family's story, as well as music and recorded dances inspired by the Aztec corn gods. The story reveals itself in short segments like the folded partitions of the codices in the unique order each audience member selects on their own exploitation of the maze.

***The NEST*****From Megan Flød Johnson, St. Paul, MN**

*The NEST* is an immersive playscape for young people and their communities to explore the identity and home of an elusive and migrating Creature. Children explore ideas through unstructured play and hands-on making guided by a cohort of NEST facilitators who invite people to fill-in an empty armature with handmade writings and reflections on their city's assets and strengths along with musings/makings to welcome and unknown being.

***salty water*****From Blindspot Collective, San Diego, CA**

*salty water*, piece weaves music, movement, as well as spoken testimony and poetry (including contributions from local community members) to explore our community's history and connection to the sea. *salty water* mixes the fantastical elements of the sea with stories of San Diego family members in the Navy, Kumeyaay creation stories, and exploration of our sweat and tears. Created by a cast of 15 professional performers and 40 local youth, audiences will be guided through a larger than life experience featuring large scale puppets and themes we all can relate to on the waterfront.

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Without Walls Project at MCASD***La Lucha***

By David Israel Reynoso/Optika Moderna

Presented in Partnership with the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego

Previews April 27 – 30, in tandem with WOW Festival, continuing May 11 – June 4

1100 Kettner Blvd., San Diego, CA

Tickets start at \$39

Inspired by Lucha Libre – where professional Mexican wrestlers use masks and high-flying maneuvers to astonish and captivate audiences – *La Lucha* transports audiences to a realm of ringside thrills and backstage secrets. As you move through mysterious portals, newfound heroes confront their greatest adversaries. You may find yourself in the middle of the action or at the side of the ring, cheering the death-defying match – either way, you won't want to miss the unforgettable world of *La Lucha*.

WOW Festival Artist Biographies

**Blindspot Collective** develops transformative theatre that amplifies marginalized voices, illuminates untold stories, bridges disparate experiences, and energizes vulnerable communities. Previous collaborations with La Jolla Playhouse include *Black Séance*, *Hall Pass*, *Walks of Life*, and *when the bubble bursts*, as well as currently serving as the theater company in residence. Since its founding in 2017, Blindspot Collective has collaborated with The Old Globe; 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 company has received acclaim for its original work, including site-specific events, forum theatre, new musicals, and verbatim plays. Blindspot Collective was the first theatre company to be awarded a performing arts residency at the San Diego International Airport and was selected "Theater of the Year" in 2020 by the San Diego Union-Tribune.

Internationally recognized artist **Cristopher Cichocki** encapsulates the cycle of decay and renewal through examining the complex relationship between humankind, the natural world, and industrial mutation. Situated on the fringe of painting, land art, sound art, and natural science, the artist's environmental interventions reflect upon timelines spanning from prehistoric oceans to present-day deserts. Within his site-responsive practice, Cichocki generates new ecosystems configured between organic and synthetic materials and sounds. His aesthetic invokes opposites; the desert is submerged underwater, while macrocosms enter the view of a microscopic lens. With deep roots as a biomorphic painter, the artist's interdisciplinary art forms are compelled by primordial archetypes and fractal geometries. Cichocki studied at CalArts and Yale Norfolk School of the Art. His work is in permanent collections that include the J. Paul Getty Museum, Palm Springs Art Museum, Lancaster Museum of Art. He has performed at museums and festivals that include Coachella, Rojo Nova, Desert Daze, The Museum of Photographic Arts, and Riviera Maya among many others. Hailing from the Coachella Valley, Cichocki has explored the depths of the California desert over the past three decades, while generating exhibitions throughout North America, South America, Asia, and Europe. IG @cristophercichocki; [circulardimensions.com](http://circulardimensions.com)

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**Close-Act Theatre Company** was founded in 1991. Originates from a collaboration between designers, actors, dancers, choreographers and musicians. Although new acts are being developed from different artistic disciplines, the style of the visual creations is still one of the unique trademarks of Close-Act. The artistic directors of Close-Act are Hesther Melief and Tonny Aerts. Close-Act is renowned for interactive street theatre. Their unique form of theatre is performed in, between and above the public. “Let us move, draw and carry you into the world we create”. What does it mean; interactive theatre? It’s most comparable to reality whereby the most important thing is the emotional rush you get. In these performances you can feel all kinds of emotions, like love, seduction, fear or compassion, it’s the ultimate way to intensify your perception of the performance. The story, how unreal it may seem, becomes reality. You are part of it just like all others around you.

**Control Group Productions** creates expeditionary performance — entirely singular live immersive experiences that take audiences on wild rides into the unknown. Together they drop into hidden corners of our familiar world, exploring rich environments filled with delicately crafted performance that bridges imagination and sensory reality, simultaneously transporting us and taking us deeper into ourselves.

**DISCO RIOT** exists to elevate a collaborative art culture in San Diego and beyond — because the world needs more movement-based art. They connect dancers and artists who want to move themselves and audiences in ways that push boundaries to make high impact art that promotes community, justice, and movement as a form of radical expression. DISCO RIOT produces and supports innovative dance programming, connects artists across media and form to grow and intensify our community, and provide an educational space that reflects contemporary and progressive professional realities. Their intent is to incite the exploration and (r)evolution of what our arts community can truly be, and to change the culture of how dance exists within it. Dance is potent; dance should move people. DISCO RIOT is here to make people feel and see something significant, and to move them towards the unexpected.

**Diversionsary Theatre** is the nation’s third-oldest LGBTQ+ theatre dedicated to amplifying queer voices through the performing arts in a dynamic, inclusive, and provocative environment that celebrates and preserves their unique culture, while contributing to an environment of diversity and inclusion throughout the broader community. Since Diversionsary’s founding in 1986, it has continually provided an inspiring and thought-provoking theatrical platform to explore complex and diverse stories of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning communities in the form of live entertainment that can be enjoyed by all.

**Megan Flød Johnson** is an Interdisciplinary Artist who imagines new art experiences for young people that fuse inquiry-driven installation spaces with participatory performance. She creates open-ended play experiences where active participation is expected, is sensory-charged and reflects unique ways young people learn and understand the world- through play. Megan develops creative youth programming for museums, art centers and theatre companies around the country. She is a 2019-21 Jerome Hill Artist Fellowship in Performance by the Jerome Foundation in St. Paul and NYC. Megan is the Interim Director of Education for SteppingStone and Park Square Theatres in St. Paul, MN where she specializes in community-based and early childhood programming. She is the founder of [Now. Make. Art.](#), an intergenerational arts event entity that invites an infusion of creative changemakers into the world by creating equitable access to arts experiences that connect collaboration, change, joy, and imagination based in St. Paul. Megan holds an MFA in Theatre for Youth along and graduate certificate in Socially Engaged Practice from Arizona State University and BA’s in Theatre and Classical Voice from Lawrence University in Appleton, WI.

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**TuYo Theater** was founded in 2017 by Maria Patrice Amon, Peter Cirino, Evelyn Diaz Cruz, Daniel Jáquez, Bernardo Mazón, and Crystal Mercado. Led by Co-Artistic Directors Peter Cirino and Maria Patrice Amon, TuYo Theatre's mission is to create and produce theatre in the San Diego area that tells stories from and by diverse Latinx perspectives. TuYo is committed to professional artistic rigor, forging authentic connections, developing community artists, and furthering the discourses that affect our community.

### La Lucha Biographies

**Optika Moderna** 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 *Las Quinceañeras* (2019 WOW Festival), *Waking La Llorona* (2017 WOW Festival), Liz Lerman's *Healing Wars* (2015 WOW Festival), Digital WOW's *Portaleza*, as well as *Queens*, *Tiger Style!* and *The Darrell Hammond Project*. His other regional scenic and costume design credits include The Old Globe, American Repertory Theater, Commonwealth Shakespeare Company, Lyric Stage and Gloucester Stage, among many others. He is the recipient of the Elliot Norton Award in Costume Design and a multiple nominee for the IRNE and BroadwayWorld awards.

**The Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (MCASD)** is the region's foremost forum devoted to the exploration and presentation of the art of today. Open since 1941, we welcome all audiences to reflect on their lives, communities, and the ever-changing world through the powerful prism of contemporary art. Between two MCASD locations — one in the heart of downtown San Diego and the other in the coastal community of La Jolla — we showcase an internationally-recognized collection. MCASD's dynamic exhibition schedule features a vast array of media in an unprecedented variety of spaces, along with a growing dedication to community experiences and public programs. As a cultural hub, MCASD seeks to catalyze conversation in our region.

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