

The San Diego Union-Tribune

01-07
OCTOBER

**Weekly
Entertainment
Guide**

NIGHT + DAY

NND



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



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TIP
OF THE WEEK

CLICKING ON "PLAN YOUR VISIT" AND THEN "FESTIVAL SCHEDULES" AT WOWFESTIVAL.ORG TAKES YOU TO A DETAILED, DOWNLOADABLE ROUNDUP OF EACH DAY'S FESTIVAL EVENTS.



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

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

When 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.)

"Refuge 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