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MAY 20, 2015

East Bay Acts at the SF International Arts Festival

This year, a glowing group of East Bay performers bring thoughtful theater and dance works to Fort Mason.

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This year's **San Francisco International Arts Festival**, taking place at Fort Mason Center, showcases Bay Area art that is meant to make people think. Its feature visual art exhibition is *Bearing Witness: Surveillance in the Drone Age*, a hefty group show of work that asks, "Where do we draw a line on revealing personal information, and can a balance between individual liberty and national security coexist?" — among other crucial questions. That's merely one title in a full week (May 21–June 7) of dance, music, theater, and visual art that, in some way, considers contemporary issues, or, at least, thoughtfully approaches creative practice. Amid the carefully curated schedule of world premieres and critics' favorites are a glowing group of East Bay performers. Below are four shows that take an innovative approach in presenting complex themes through movement and theater.

Cookie Cutter

The ka.nei.see collective hit the ground running when it debuted with *Cookie Cutter* at the Shawl-Anderson Dance Center in Berkeley last year. For a long time, Tanya Chianese (last name pronounced ka-nei-see, get it?) had been hoping to showcase her choreographic work under a company name, but never

had the right opportunity. *Cookie Cutter* turned out to be a fitting premiere, busting into the Bay Area dance scene, garnering immediate critical acclaim, and selling out every seat for its two-weekend run. The playful contemporary dance performance is a series of vignettes on the concept of cookie cutters — particularly, the idea that society expects women to fit a specific mold. Some portions are figurative explorations of what it means to be stereotypical, while others are more literal, involving a stage full of cookie cutters and milk as a prop. The dancers move to a varied soundtrack — ranging from the folk music of the Avett Brothers to the comedy of Jim Gaffigan — to form a playful collection of works.

At the San Francisco International Arts Festival, ka.nei.see will be performing vignettes from *Cookie Cutter*, as well as premiering two new works. One, a trio entitled *Excuse Me, But I Was Speaking*, is a gestural comment on the fact that women are more likely to be interrupted than men and employs choreography inspired by femininity. The other, entitled *TerSIS*, is about the relationship between sisters, whether that be frustrating or affectionate. They will perform on Friday, June 5 at 9 p.m., Saturday, June 6 at 4:30 p.m., and Sunday, June 7 at 8 p.m. in the Fleet Room at Fort Mason Center in San Francisco. Tickets are \$25.

reveries & elegies Volume TWO

For experimental choreographer, performance artist, and videographer Mary Armentrout, each incarnation of *reveries & elegies* feels like the next step in an ongoing adventure — the next stanza in a continual poem, if you will. The dream-like dance theater installation centers on Armentrout, in a long black dress, sifting through a projected landscape of video work. Soon enough, two body-doubles appear, both following and defying her lead. The piece is a meditation on identity and, self-reflexively, the act of turning oneself into a character through theater. It is also meant to make the audience aware of the performance site in a new way — "exploding" the space, as Armentrout put it in an interview. The setting will be multiplied through video artworks, including a time-lapse of the venue, and go-pro footage of Armentrout dancing through the area surrounding it. The tone of the work is enigmatic, evoking calm consideration. It is meant to dance between speaking to the wondrousness of the world and the decay inherent in it, pushing the audience to experience the emotional content of both extremes at once.

After she premiered *reveries & elegies* to awed audiences in late 2012, Armentrout will bring the second chapter to this year's festival. It will follow through on the same themes and format as the initial show, while presenting a novel, site-specific experience. Timed to be performed during sunset, *reveries & elegies* will take place on Thursday, June 4 and Sunday, June 7 at 8 p.m. in the center's Firehouse. Tickets are \$20–\$25.

Amnesia

Ariel Luckey's *Amnesia* is an attempt at remembering. Through the one-man play, accompanied by a full live band, Luckey traces his familial past throughout the United States and all the way back to a small village in Russia. More broadly, it's also an attempt to consider what it means to be an immigrant, and reshape the immigrant stereotype along the way. After all, everyone living in America who isn't Native American is an immigrant in some sense.

Luckey was inspired to write the play in 2010, when Arizona passed SB 1070, an anti-immigration law that allowed police to demand citizenship papers from residents based merely on "reasonable suspicion." Opening an opportunity for racial profiling, the bill's passage resulted in an aggressive wave of deportations of Mexican immigrants. Luckey, who was born and raised in Oakland, has a lot of family in Arizona, but knew that they weren't originally from there — yet why weren't they viewed as immigrants?

In *Amnesia*, Luckey plays himself moving backward in time, as well as his great-great-grandfather, moving forward in his life, beginning in Russia and

ending in Phoenix. As one might anticipate, the two eventually cross paths and explore the similarities and differences between their experiences. After premiering the play last year at La Peña Cultural Center in Berkeley (which also commissioned the work), and touring it since then, Luckey will re-enact the journey three more times for the festival on Thursday, May 28 at 8:30 p.m., Saturday, May 30 at 9 p.m., and Sunday, May 31 at 2 p.m. in the Southside Theater. Tickets are \$20–\$25.

Quantum Love

Giulio Cesare Perrone, the artistic director of the Berkeley-based Inferno Theater, talks about theater in an unexpectedly scientific manner. In a thick Italian accent, the award-winning playwright said in an interview that theater can be made to express quantum physics through its creation of multiple realities and exemplification of the ways in which every action affects the future (i.e., "the butterfly effect"). The Inferno Theater production *Quantum Love*, which will be premiering at the festival, dives into those similarities through a dramatic romance interspersed with moments of humor. The play consists of multiple love stories that progress alongside each other linearly, but converge at the end to form a circular plot. One of the stories is meant to represent reality, while the others are imaginary refractions of that world. The production merges references to physics with renditions of Shakespeare, all the while translating much of its message into dance. For example, a tango sequence will demonstrate how a particle moves through space. Taking into account the scientific rule that the role of the observer always affects the outcome of the experiment, the actors will express awareness of the ways in which the audience's presence is affecting the performance — but how that will manifest remains to be seen.

Quantum Love will take place on Thursday, May 21 at 8 p.m., Saturday, May 23, Sunday, May 24, and Friday, May 29 at 7 p.m., Friday, May 29 at 9 p.m., and Sunday, May 31 at 5:30 p.m. in the Firehouse. Tickets are \$20–\$25.

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