

DATEBOOK

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Justin Katigbak/Special to The Chronicle

Detour Dance's "We Build Houses Here," performed on Friday, May 5, at Oasis in San Francisco, is a walk-through, immersive show that uses being shipwrecked as metaphor to address what it's like to be a queer artist or drag queen right now.

Energy ebbs in middle of immersive theater

By Lily Janiak

If an oasis can be a harbor from danger, a beacon for outsiders and castaways, safety and isolation from the rest of the world can also be kind of boring.

Or as a character played by Erin Mei-Ling Stuart puts it in "We Build Houses Here," there's only so long you can gaze at perfect blue horizons before you really start to crave a book.

Detour Dance's immersive piece of dance-theater, which opened Friday, May 5, makes the canny move of staging a show about an oasis in the SoMa nightclub with that name. Its cast of shipwrecked characters — some in drag, others playing with or queering gender and sexuality in expansive ways — are the sort who, on land, might seek in Oasis an oasis from anti-LGBTQ legislation and violence. The affirming gesture of the show, which was written by Brian Thorstenson and directed by Eric Garcia with Cornelius, Maurya Kerr and Chuck Wilt, is to make a metaphor of the queer feelings of being lost at sea and searching for refuge.

But after a gorgeous opening number where the dance invokes oars, engine pistons and flailing underwater on Oasis' catwalk stage, the show's energy dissipates.

The problem is one that frequently bedevils walk-through, self-guided immersive theater: a perpetual feeling of FOMO. When multiple scenes happen simultaneously, you as an audience member must make choice upon choice, to invest in this char-



Wiley Naman Strasser (left) and Erin Mei-Ling Stuart perform in "We Build Houses Here."

"We Build Houses Here": Written by Brian Thorstenson. Directed by Eric Garcia with Cornelius, Maurya Kerr and Chuck Wilt. Through May 20. One hour, 45 minutes. \$30-\$65. Oasis, 298 11th St., S.F. www.detourdance.com

acter over here or that one over there. Every flicker of boredom or loud reaction somewhere else makes whatever decision you made seem like the wrong one. But if you abandon ship now, how do you know something good won't happen the instant you leave?

"We Build Houses Here" compounds that problem with individual sequences that just aren't very interesting. There are only so many times you can watch someone drift like kelp, thrash like waves or wash ashore before

you, too, start to feel at sea. Audience interaction bits — taking a hand and guiding it through some rudimentary pantomime — are offered as if they're weighty and spiritual but come off as fatuous, as if the performers don't know we're not kids. Characters silently wowl, wielding flashlights as rock star microphones, performing a private, cringey agony.

The more successful individual scenes are like a beachcomber's haul: a handful of shells, shards and pearls that can form meaning in juxtapo-

sition but might just as easily be scattered back into the sea.

Stuart recites a bit from "The Odyssey" about the sirens' dangerous song while another performer, Cheeta Biscotti, ties her to a post, just like in the epic poem, only here the constraint allows her to lean away from the column to float and fly. Quinn Dixon, who uses gender-neutral pronouns, merges a lust for drinking water with regular lust to uproarious effect; when they squeeze an empty plastic water bottle till it cracks, all kinds of thirsts are at play.

Crucial to the show's world-building is Jaren Feeley's smart sound design, which devises an audio equiv-

Houses continues on B10

Hundreds of concert tickets \$25 for one week only

By Aidin Vaziri

In time for the summer concert season, Live Nation has announced the return of its popular \$25 all-in ticket promotion.

Starting Wednesday, May 10, through Tuesday, May 16, concertgoers will have access to discounted passes for more than 3,800 shows by 300 acts across the continent, including performances by Snoop Dogg, the Smashing Pumpkins, Janet Jackson, Counting Crows, Santana, and co-headliners Beck and Phoenix.

The annual program offers fans the opportunity to attend concerts of all sizes, from intimate club performances to arena extravaganzas, with no hidden fees or extra charges.

To take advantage of the promotion, fans must visit LiveNation.com/ConcertWeek, select a participating show and purchase the specially labeled "Concert Week Promotion" tickets. No promo code is required.

Customers of Verizon and cash-back app Rakuten will have the first opportunity to purchase tickets on Tuesday, May 9, through their respective presales, with general on-sale beginning at 10 a.m. the following day. Fans can filter their search for participating shows by event, venue or artist, and can even set their location to find shows nearby.

Beyond the headliners, the promotion features a diverse array of artists, including 5 Seconds of Summer, co-headliners Garbage and Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds, the Offspring, Hayley Kiyoko, Pink, Avenged Sevenfold, Hunter Hayes, co-headliners Rob Zombie and Alice Cooper, Rod Stewart, Boy George and Culture Club, Keith Urban, Shania Twain, Sam Hunt, Charlie Puth, co-headliners Def Leppard and Mötley Crüe, LL Cool J, Luke Bryan, Weezer, Fall Out Boy, Måneskin, Louis Tomlinson, Miranda Lambert, Wizkid, Wu-Tang Clan, Nas and many others.

Hilton Honors members can also use their points to purchase select Concert Week tickets by connecting their accounts and visiting the website for more information.

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Associated Press

Snoop Dogg is one of the many artists participating in Live Nation's Concert Week promotion.

SFJazz continues on B10

New bicoastal projects beating the drum for collaboration



Juliana Yamada/The Chronicle

Pianist and musical director Joe Warner has East Coast gigs coming up with longtime mentor Faye Carol.

By Andrew Gilbert

The Dynamic Miss Faye Carol has spent more than half a century joyfully toiling in various fields of Black music while raising up successive generations of ever younger musicians. Now, after so many years devoted to tireless sowing, she's enjoying the fruits, reaping choice gigs with Joe Warner.

More than a protege and ace accompanist, Martinez-raised pianist Warner has turned into a swing-or-die production partner for the Berkeley singer, eager and willing to do the

hard work required for high-profile engagements. This week, he's excited to present "Give the Drummer Some," a four-night series he curated for the SFJazz Center, running Thursday, May 11, through Sunday, May 14.

It's not just that Warner has

lined up some of jazz's most influential drummers. National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master Billy Hart (Thursday), fusion great Lenny White (Friday), funk/jazz innovator Dennis Chambers (Saturday), and protean Jeff "Tain" Watts (Sunday) all embody distinct rhythmic sensibilities as members of era-defining bands.

For Carol and Warner, that's the point. "Being able to play with people with really different approaches makes your thing more well-rounded," said Warner, a longtime Oak-

Local Pulitzer wins include opera coming to S.F.

By Joshua Kosman

“Omar,” Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels’ opera based on the true story of an enslaved African Muslim scholar, has won the 2023 Pulitzer Prize for music.

San Francisco Opera is among the companies that commissioned the work, which is scheduled for a local premiere at the War Memorial Opera House in November. Giddens, the MacAr-

thur fellow who is a founding member of the Carolina Chocolate Drops and hosts the opera podcast “Aria Go,” wrote the libretto for “Omar” and collaborated with Abels on the score. He is known as the composer for the Jordan Peele films “Get Out,” “Us” and “Nope.”

In a statement to The Chronicle, San Francisco Opera General Director Matthew Shilvock called the prize “a testament to the creative genius of

Rhiannon and Michael in their award-winning opera.

He added, “It is the kind of truth that should be on the opera house stage, and I am so proud that we will present it this fall.”

“Omar” had its world premiere in May 2022 at the Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston, S.C., and has since been presented in Los Angeles and Charlotte, N.C. The title role was created by American tenor James McCormick,

who is scheduled to appear in San Francisco.

In awarding “Omar” the prestigious annual prize on Monday, May 8, the Pulitzer committee cited it as a piece “that respectfully represents African as well as African American traditions, expanding the language of the operatic form while conveying the humanity of those condemned to bondage.”

Reporters and photographers from The Chronicle were named as finalists this year in two of the prizes in the journalism categories. In addition to the music prize, there was recognition in other arts categories for works with a Bay Area connection.

“Stay True,” Hua Hsu’s poignant memoir of his South Bay childhood and coming of age at UC Berkeley in the 1990s, was awarded the prize for memoir or autobiography.

In the drama category, the Pulitzer board also

awarded the prize to “English,” Sanaz Toossi’s chamber work about four adults learning English in an Iranian classroom. On Sunday, May 7, the play completed an acclaimed West Coast premiere run at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, which Chronicle theater critic Lily Janiak described as “a master class in subtext.”

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SFJAZZ

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land resident. “You have to adjust your thing with each of these cats. That’s part of the joy and the challenge.”

Warner first presented “Give the Drummer Some” at Berkeley’s California Jazz Conservatory in the fall of 2021, with a grant from the arts-centric Fleishacker Foundation. It’s one of several concert and workshop series featuring illustrious guests he and Carol have produced in recent years, often using the Uptown Oakland hotspot Geoffrey’s Inner Circle as a home base.

For his SFJazz Center Joe Henderson Lab run, Warner plays trio with the first two nights with bass maestro Essiet Essiet, while Carol joins the rhythm section for the shows featuring Chambers and Watts.

After a career taking care of her own business as a DIY solo artist without a manager or agent, she’s thankful to be in a do-it-yourself situation. “It’s always been incumbent on me to move myself forward,” Carol said. “I found Joe loves this music as much as I do. We have the same musical mind and vision for moving forward.” In another major step,

the two plan to head to the East Coast at the end of the month for a gig at Manhattan’s Mezzrow on May 28 with Watts. They follow that auspicious New York debut with a June 7 engagement featuring Chambers at Keystone Korner Baltimore, the club run by former San Francisco jazz producer Todd Barkan (who often hired Carol for shows at Great American Music Hall).

Back in the Bay Area, Carol’s School of the Getdown presents the Black Music Month Festival on June 17 at East Oakland’s Love Center Ministries featuring Bobi Cespedes, Stephanie Crawford and Netta Brielle with Basie Orchestra pianist Glen Pearson’s trio. Then Geoffrey’s Inner Circle hosts the June 26-30 School of the Getdown Youth Arts Camp, a program for budding performers of all skill levels, ages 10-16.

It’s easy to understand why Carol and Warner seek out internationally renowned artists for collaborations. But players with reputations like those featured on “Give the Drummer Some” receive dozens of offers for gigs every month. One reason the dynamic duo’s overtures are so often successful is that they bring more than music to the table.



The Dynamic Miss Faye Carol, shown in 2008, is part of “Give the Drummer Some,” a four-night series at the SFJazz Center, running Thursday, May 8, through Sunday, May 14.

“They’re really trying to speak love with music and connect the community,” Watts said. “They represent what the music is about on a real organic level. It’s a family situation. We’re truly getting to know each other.”

Watts, who came to fame in the mid-1980s as a founding member of the Branford Marsalis Quartet, heard about Carol through the musician’s grapevine long before he first came out to work with her and Warner in January, fill-

ing in for an ailing Victor Lewis. The presence of his old New York comrade and dear friend Essiet Essiet and the location of the gig (“I’ll come to the Bay for lunch, basically,” he said) didn’t hurt either. “I’ve been hearing

about Faye for years, that she has an appreciation for drummers especially. She’s very authentic, and I want as much of that in my life as possible,” Watts said. “And Joe’s got a lot more depth than many young pianists.”

Warner, 34, acquired much of that depth by working closely with Carol. He’d been studying with saxophone great Howard Wiley, an earlier Carol protege, who brought the young pianist to her attention. She took Warner under her wing when he was about 18, and the relationship has brought a good deal of sunshine to the lionsess in winter.

“I’ve always worked to make myself a world-class act, but I’ve not always been able to go in the world,” Carol said, noting that she was raising her daughter during prime touring years. “Now we can bring the world here. I’m like the Golden Gate Bridge. You can come see us.”

Andrew Gilbert is a freelance writer.

HOUSES

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alent for the feeling of abyss. It’s not just a ship’s creaks and waves’ crashes that create a sense of bottomlessness, but the way tones never resolve. Even as the composer forges new moods and environments — ominous here, gentle and beachy there — that lack of finality dominates.

Aldid Portalfan Pérez’s costumes are just as shrewd. Buckled straps on calves, beeps and necks conjure both boating and bondage. Rough-cut fabric, with threads dangling, suggests a castaway look. Seales evoke a mermaid’s fin. Glittering makeup in a sunburst around the eyes gives human characters the touch of undersea creatures.

Some of the show’s most beautiful moments

come toward the end. A makeshift rope made out of linsens knotted end to end becomes a stand-in for all the things castaways leave behind and forget. When performer Wiley Naman Strasegatchies the last hankie and buries his face in it, he reveals us landlubbers, with our attachment to all sorts of material things, as silly and sad and irredeemably human.

And in a coup de theater, the show’s glorious final image summons the blinding light of a desert island at high noon, then quickly melts it into a darkness interrupted only by a lighthouse’s swiveling beam. We’re all alone and afraid in the dark. “We Build Houses Here,” says, and our oases are as essential as the sun.

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ON TELEVISION

Table with columns for Broadcast, Time Slot, and Program Name. Includes categories like A&E, AMC, BET, and various news channels.

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Crossword Puzzle

Grid for crossword puzzle answers with letters and numbers.

Today's Crossword

Grid for today's crossword puzzle answers with letters and numbers.

Sudoku Puzzle

Grid for a 9x9 Sudoku puzzle.

Challenger

Grid for a 6x6 Challenger puzzle.