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BACKSTAGE: Young ballerina to dance with NYC Ballet

By PAM KRAGEN - pkragen@nctimes.com North County Times - The Californian | Posted: Wednesday, May 4, 2011 8:33 am
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Elizabeth Houk, a 9-year-old ballerina from San Marcos, will perform this summer with the New York City Ballet.

Elizabeth Houk, a 9-year-old ballerina from San Marcos, is getting a jump start in the professional dancing world with the opportunity to dance with the New York City Ballet this summer.

Houk, the daughter of San Elijo co-founders Ben and Lauri-Michelle Houk, was chosen from more than 150 young dancers in the United States to perform with NYC Ballet during its season at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center July 5-16. Thirty-four children were selected to perform youth roles in the Ballet's "Magic Flute" and "Circus Polka" productions.

Houk, a third-grader at the Rhoades School in Encinitas, said the audition was exciting and nerve-wracking.

"A lot of people were getting cut, so I was really nervous," she said. "The New York City Ballet is really important, and people are going to come from a lot of different places to see the performance that I'm going to be in, and I'm really excited."

Her mother, Lauri-Michelle, said Elizabeth's selection into the program is a testament to San Elijo's training program. "New York City Ballet is the premier ballet company in the world, and to be a part of the children's cast is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for a little girl."

"The Blood We Shed," a 20-minute documentary by two Cal State San Marcos student filmmakers, has been selected for the GI Film Festival next week in Washington, D.C.

Co-directed and co-produced by **Ryan Smith and Sebastian Maselli**, "The Blood We Shed" tells the story of three U.S. marines in the Wounded Warrior Program.

In an online biography, Ryan, 33, describes himself as a filmmaker who came to the craft belatedly. As a young man, he dreamed of a career in professional sports, but an injury on the field kept him confined to bed for three years. Once he recovered, he decided to pursue a career as a film director. Smith's family has a long history of military service and his mother

works as a case manager for injured marines and sailors at Camp Pendleton.

Maselli is a former Marine who served in the Iraq War. During his last two years of service, he was assigned to the Wounded Warrior Battalion West at Camp Pendleton. After finishing his service, Maselli enrolled at Cal State San Marcos in 2009, where he met Ryan in a documentary film class. They teamed up to do a class project on the Wounded Warriors program, and their film, "The Blood We Shed," grew out of that experience.

Radio host Rick Roberts, the Marine Corps' Semper Fi fund and the university pooled their resources to allow the two filmmakers to fly to the festival this weekend.

A musical based on Homer's epic war saga "The Odyssey," will be produced by the Old Globe next fall as part of the theater's Southeastern San Diego Residency Project.

"**Odyssey**," conceived and directed by Lear deBessonet, with book, music and lyrics by Todd Almond, will re-set Homer's tale (about Odysseus' 10-year journey back to Ithaca after the Trojan War) in modern-day San Diego.

The play will be presented Sept. 30 and Oct. 1 and 2 in the Globe's outdoor Lowell Davies Festival Theatre and will feature more than 60 students from San Diego's Lincoln High School, as well as a corps of professional actors.

Globe executive producer Lou Spisto said "Odyssey" was commissioned two years ago as a project to celebrate the Globe's 75th anniversary.

"The Globe began in 1935 as part of the California Exposition celebration," Spisto said in a statement. "From those roots and a strong commitment from the community, the theater became an integral part of the fabric of San Diego ... At the time of its founding, this institution reflected the community of its time. This project celebrates a more diverse San Diego today, and I felt that it was absolutely essential to include our partners in Southeastern San Diego and the community at large in this theatrical celebration."

DeBessonet specializes in creating large-scale, site-specific theatrical events, with past projects in New York, Minneapolis, Kazakhstan and Cambodia. Past projects include "On the Levee" at New York's Lincoln Center and "Don Quixote" in Philadelphia. Almond's past musicals include "On the Levee" (with deBessonet), "We Have Always Lived in the Castle" at Yale Rep and "Girlfriend" at Berkeley Rep.

"Odyssey" is not part of the Globe's regular subscription season. Tickets will go on sale this summer.

Free Comic Book Day, a worldwide event to promote comic books for young readers and others, returns Saturday, when comics producers will give away an estimated 2.5 million comic books at nearly 2,000 comic book specialty stores in the U.S. and Canada.

Locally, stores participating in the 10th annual free comics giveaway are Invincible Ink at 630 Nordahl Road, Suite K, in San Marcos, and Comickaze Comics Books and More at 5517 Clairemont Mesa Blvd. in San Diego. Visit freecomicbookday.com.

The **Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego**, has announced it will offer free year-round admission to the more than 300,000 military personnel and their family members who live in San Diego County.

"Our community has thousands of military families, and this is just one way our institution can thank them for all they do," Hugh Davies, the museum's director, in a statement. "Art should be accessible. We want to provide a place where these families can connect with the art and spend quality time together, at no cost to them."

Davies said the idea to offer year-round passes to the media was inspired by its participation last year in the Blue Star Museums initiative, where military members were let in free between Memorial Day and Labor Day. But deployments kept many local military from taking advantage of last year's program.

"The typical tour of duty doesn't last from June to August," Davies said. "These men and women are called to service throughout the year, and their counterparts are looking for opportunities to educate and entertain their children while they're gone. We hope we can help."



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BACKSTAGE



PAM KRAGEN

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Des McAnuff's Playhouse encore shapes up as an autumn theater highlight

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Paul Nolan (center) plays the title role in the Stratford Shakespeare Festival's revival of "Jesus Christ Superstar," a production that director Des McAnuff brings to La Jolla Playhouse (his longtime artistic home) this fall. — Andrew Eccles



Written by
**James
Hebert**

11:47 a.m., Aug. 28, 2011

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'Jesus Christ Superstar' hasn't exactly been left to wander in the showbiz wilderness since its 1971 premiere; the breakout musical by composer [Andrew Lloyd Webber](#) and lyricist Tim Rice still gets resurrected regularly around the world.

But here's what's different about the production that hits [La Jolla Playhouse](#) in November: The Mac is back.

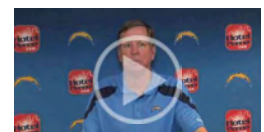
That's [Des McAnuff](#), who revived the then-dormant Playhouse in 1983, guided it to national, [Tony Award](#)-winning prominence, and served two stints as its artistic director. Now, for the first time since he left La Jolla in



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2007, McAnuff is set to return — bringing with him a “Superstar” staging that has been the hot summer ticket at Canada’s esteemed [Stratford Shakespeare Festival](#) and is likely headed to Broadway.

The Playhouse engagement came about quickly, announced in July as a replacement for the previously scheduled “Finding Neverland,” now shelved indefinitely. But for current Playhouse artistic chief Christopher Ashley, the development has in one way been four years in the making.

“The first day I took over this office, I said, ‘When do we get you back? How do we get you back?’ ” Ashley recalled of his talks with McAnuff, who is now Stratford’s artistic director. “Des at the Playhouse has to (happen).

“And to have him back with this show that is so heralded, and creating so much excitement — I feel as though the stars were aligned.”

“Jesus Christ Superstar,” which premiered on Broadway 40 years ago this summer, tells the story of Christ’s final days, and of his complex relationships with Mary Magdalene, the Apostles and the conflicted antihero Judas Iscariot. The musical, which introduced such songs as “I Don’t Know How to Love Him” and “Superstar,” was among the earliest major successes for Lloyd Webber, whose subsequent megahits include “Cats,” “Evita” and “The Phantom of the Opera.”

McAnuff, who first began talking with Lloyd Webber about directing a revival some 15 years ago, says both co-creators have been “very supportive” of the Stratford production.

“This has been, I guess, churning and bubbling away in my brain for a long time,” says McAnuff, whose Playhouse-launched “Jersey Boys” is nearing its six-year anniversary on Broadway. “And I think it has turned out very well.”

Also coming up:

“Richard O’Brien’s Rocky Horror Show”: The spoofy show that spawned a cult movie (not to mention endless torrents of toast, part of its audience-participation ethos) makes its Globe debut. Director Oanh Nguyen of Chance Theatre in Orange County leads a production that now includes Broadway veteran [Matt McGrath](#) as the raunchy, cross-dressing renegade Frank ‘N’ Furter. (McGrath has played the title role off-Broadway in “Hedwig and the Angry Inch,” a kind of spiritual cousin to Frank.) Sept. 15 to Nov. 6. [Old Globe Theatre](#). \$29-\$122. (619) 234-5623 or [oldglobe.org](#).

“Hair”: The touring version of Diane Paulus’ much-praised “Hair” revival gives us a trifecta of big, throwback rock musicals. This latest take on the 1968 show won the Tony for best revival in 2009 (and is back on Broadway for an encore). Among its classic songs: “Aquarius,” “Let the Sun Shine In” and “I Got Life.” Oct. 18-23. Civic Theatre (Broadway/San Diego). \$20-\$89.50 (subject to change). (619) 564-3000 or [broadwaysd.com](#)

“Odyssey”: Director Lear deBessonnet, renowned for her site-specific works, and writer Todd Almond collaborate on this San Diego-minded adaptation of Homer’s epic poem. The piece, part of the Globe’s Southeastern San Diego Residency Project, will go up on the theater’s outdoor stage and include more than 100 members of the community. Sept. 30 to Oct. 2. Old Globe. Tickets TBA. (619) 234-5623 or [oldglobe.org](#)

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'Odyssey' readies a singular theatrical journey

Old Globe musical project takes in 200 performers, San Diego themes

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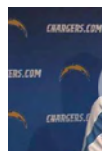


Director Lear deBessonet addresses the "Odyssey" ensemble at the Old Globe. — Sean M. Haffey

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Written by
**James
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It's not often that a cast gathering can just about fill up the capacious main room in the [Old Globe Theatre's](#) Balboa Park rehearsal digs.

And yet the 45 or so performers who assembled there on Tuesday night are barely a quarter of the total cast for "Odyssey," the ambitious, maybe unprecedented (at least locally) musical-theater project by director Lear deBessonnet and writer-composer Todd Almond.

For the show, which deBessonnet calls "a [San Diego](#)-specific version" of the ageless Homer epic, some 200 people have been culled from auditions around town as well as through community partners that include Culture Shock San Diego, the San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory, San Diego Junior Theatre, the St. Stephen's Church Choir and the Valhalla High School Percussion Ensemble.

The "Odyssey" production is part of the theater's Southeastern San Diego Residency Project, which Globe executive producer Louis G. Spisto launched about three years ago as a way of connecting with San Diegans in an economically disadvantaged part of the city. Previous Project productions were the hip-hop-driven shows "Kingdom" and "Welcome to Arroyo's."

Some of the actors in "Odyssey" are a bit higher-profile than others. Alvin Crawford (who wasn't present at Tuesday's event) will be leaving the cast of Broadway's "The Lion King" for a month to rehearse and perform as [Odysseus](#). Shelly Thomas, whose credits include the production "On the Levee" at [Lincoln Center Theater](#) with deBessonnet and Almond, plays Odysseus' long-suffering wife, Penelope.

And Darlene Davies, a longtime Globe legend as a performer and supporter, will take the theater's stage for the first time since 1961. That stage, the outdoor Lowell Davies Festival Theatre, happens to be named for her late husband, who was a Globe board president and major figure in its history.

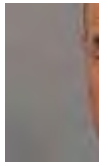
DeBessonnet, who is barely 30 but has wide experience in creating ambitious, sprawling site-specific works, is in the home stretch of an "Odyssey" process that began with research and conversations some three years ago. (The production is timed to tie in with the theater's recent 75th anniversary.)

"This is the beginning of the magic that is going to unfold over the next five weeks," she told the diverse group that had gathered for the pot-luck event.

As the attendees introduced themselves to each other, it became clear they hailed from a wide variety of places originally - New York and France and Senegal among them. DeBessonnet said her early discovery of locals' often wide-ranging origins is actually what prompted her to think of Odysseus and his epic journey homeward.

"It started to make me think about stories of home, and the journeys that

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Things

people take to get home. That's where 'The Odyssey' came up as an idea."

The idea behind the musical, she added, is to present "a vision of a unified city. A place where we can celebrate each other."

"Odyssey" runs Sept. 30 to Oct. 2.

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Photo by Sam Hodgson

A portion of the cast of the Old Globe's production of "Odyssey" poses for a group photo during a potluck event last week.

Posted: Thursday, September 8, 2011 12:29 pm | Updated: 12:34 pm, Thu Sep 8, 2011.

By [Kelly Bennett](#)

The elevator and hallways filled with people lugging grocery bags and foil containers of chicken and salad and more pieces of dinner, descending to the basement of The Old Globe's rehearsal building in Balboa Park one evening last week.

A potluck's sense of randomness, and bringing what you have, was not a gratuitous metaphor. The crowd filing into the room contained teenagers, businesspeople, well-coiffed ladies, a park ranger and a dance teacher originally from Senegal. They'd come to the Globe through sundry roads.

This is The Old Globe's new "Odyssey" production.

Dozens more will be involved in the effort in the next few weeks as the Globe launches an experiment with community engagement in conjunction with its 75th anniversary. The theater hired director Lear deBessonet and composer and lyricist Todd Almond to come up with a musical theater piece that could involve a slew of San Diego community members and institutions as well as professional actors.

After meeting with a range of San Diegans over the last couple of years, deBessonet said she found an undeniable trend: Nearly everyone has come here from somewhere else.

Those "stories of home, and the journeys people take to get home," inspired her, she told the group. She and Almond re-imagined a "San Diego-specific" version of Homer's epic poem, "Odyssey," and she combed the city for its stars.

DeBessonet paid special attention to community groups in the city's poorer, ethnically diverse southeastern neighborhoods. The Old Globe bought a building in southeastern San Diego a few years ago to house its prop and costume collection and to provide space for its set-building department so it wouldn't be squished into the main theater in Balboa Park.

"Odyssey" attempts to identify the Globe as a neighbor in that community, not just using space there.

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The St. Stephen's choir, from one of the [oldest African-American churches](#) in the area, will appear as the voice of Athena. An assembly of park rangers, led by Ranger Kim Duclo, will serve as Penelope's suitors. The drumline from Valhalla High School will play the palace guard.

Filling out the rest of the ensemble will be neighborhood residents who came through those community centers like the Jackie Robinson YMCA, hip-hop dancers from Culture Shock, musicians from San Diego Youth Symphony, kids from Junior Theatre, and a handful of the Globe's Guilders, a group that organizes fundraising and volunteering for the theater.

Beyond the community members, there are a couple of notable out-of-towners. Alvin Crawford will take a month off from his ensemble role in the Broadway production of "The Lion King" to join the cast as Odysseus later this week.



One of the potluckers, Andre Carter, is playing one of Odysseus's men. Carter hypothesized while he ate about which way he'd be killed off in the play, knowing the whole posse goes, whether by monster, by weather or by the three dangerous fish-women known as Sirens in Greek mythology.

"All that's left to find out is: Siren, storm or Cyclops?" he said. "I prefer Siren."

Carter ended up in the play by chance. One morning he drove to the Jackie Robinson Y to talk to the director about contracting with them to provide some financial benefits packages.

But before he could pay his business call, he saw a sign for the auditions. He went. He's still yet to make it to the meeting.

This kind of community-focused theater has earned deBessonnet [critical acclaim](#) in other cities.

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As the group finished eating, she highlighted the Globe's founding in 1935 as part of the California Expo and suggested theater, in its ideal form, provides a way to explore human achievement and story.

Facing a full room, each person representing a number of details and logistics that she'll be trying to weave together all month, deBessonnet spoke hopefully about the play.

"What we're proposing with this play is a vision of a unified, joyful city," she said. "A place where we can celebrate each other."

"Odyssey" will be presented on Friday, Sept. 30 and Saturday, Oct. 1 at 8 p.m. and Sunday, Oct. 2 at 7 p.m. in the Globe's Lowell Davies Festival Theatre. Tickets are \$15.

I'm Kelly Bennett, the arts editor for VOSD. You can reach me directly at kelly.bennett@voiceofsandiego.org or 619.325.0531.

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Odyssey, In Celebration of The Old Globe's 75th Anniversary: September 30 - October 2, 2011

September 2, 2011 in *Upcoming Events* by [Sarah Jones](#)

Executive Producer Lou Spisto today announced the San Diego Community Partners with which director Lear deBessonet and writer Todd Almond have developed a new music theater event, Odyssey, in celebration of The Old Globe's 75th anniversary. Commissioned by the Globe, the new work reimagines Homer's epic poem as seen through the lens of contemporary San Diego. Conceived and directed by deBessonet with music, lyrics and book by Almond, Odyssey will be performed through a unique collaboration between professional artists and members of the community. Odyssey will be presented on Friday, September 30th and Saturday, October 1st at 8pm, and Sunday, October 2nd at 7pm in the Globe's Lowell Davies Festival Theatre.

Featuring a cast of over 200 performers, Odyssey chronicles the trials and adventures that the ancient Greek hero Odysseus faces on his long journey home from the war at Troy. Along the way, he encounters a one-eyed giant, confronts the horrifying monsters Scylla and Charybdis, visits the Underworld and resists the intoxicating Circe. Odysseus finally returns home disguised as a beggar and must win back his wife, Penelope, and take revenge on the suitors who have been circling her in his absence.

For more information, visit: www.theoldglobe.org



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Thursday, September 1, 2011

Cast of 200 Featured in The Old Globe's ODYSSEY



The Old Globe is celebrating its 75th Anniversary with *Odyssey*, which is the culmination of a two-year project with the community, and is a part of the Globe's Southeastern San Diego Residency Project developed by director **Lear deBessonnet** and writer **Todd Almond**.

The new work reimagines Homer's epic poem as seen through the lens of contemporary San Diego. Conceived and directed by deBessonnet with music, lyrics and book by Almond, *Odyssey* will be performed through a unique collaboration between professional artists and members of the community on Friday, Sept. 30 and Saturday, Oct. 1 at 8:00 p.m. and Sunday, Oct. 2 at 7:00 p.m.

Odyssey chronicles the trials and adventures that the ancient Greek hero Odysseus faces on his long journey home from the war at Troy. Along the way, he encounters a one-eyed giant,



confronts the horrifying monsters Scylla and Charybdis, visits the Underworld and resists the intoxicating Circe. Odysseus finally returns home disguised as a beggar and must win back his wife, Penelope, and take revenge on the suitors who have been circling her in his absence.

Professional actors **Alvin Crawford** and **Shelley Thomas** will star as Odysseus and Penelope/Circe, respectively, along with **Todd Almond** as The Singer.

Community Partners on the project include:

St. Stephen's Church Choir as the voice of heaven
 Culture Shock Dance San Diego playing the Phaeacians
 The San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory will score a dream ballet of Odysseus' homecoming
 Valhalla High School Percussion Ensemble will play the Palace Guard
 Children from San Diego Junior Theatre will play the Voices of the Underworld.

The creative team includes Tony and Maria Caligagan (Choreographers), Justin Townsend (Scenic and Lighting Design), Paul Carey (Costume Design), Paul Peterson (Sound Design) and Evangeline Whitlock (Stage Manager).



Over 200 will participate in Odyssey
Photo: Jeffrey Weiser

The nonprofessional cast, comprised of members of the San Diego community, includes Darlene Davies (Eurynome), Kim Duclo (Penelope's First Suitor), Michael Garcia (Prince), Dylan Hoffinger (Odysseus' Captain), Martin Martiarena

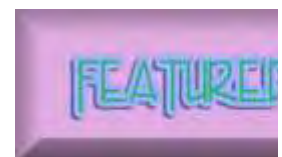


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(Dude with Guitar), Lorenzo Martinez (Elpenor), Alex Monge (Telemachus), Davina Van Dusen (Nausicaa), Victoria Matthews, Jordan Scowcroft and Katie Ward (The Calliopes) and dancers from Salsa Inferno (Circe's Ladies) with Jessica Brandon, Dalaysia Cannon, Ashley Dixon, Richard Dobbs, Deja Fields, Renee Gandola, Zyanya Hernandez-Grant, Carson McCalley, Karen Olinga, Al Simmons, Beverly Taylor-Wintence, Lamine Thiam, Hannah Trujillo and Ayerton Zoutendijk (Ithacans/Ensemble); Kenn Burnett, Leland Campbell, Eduard Cao, Andre A. Carter, Sergio Castro, Will Herrera, Dylan Hoffinger, Lorenzo Martinez, Leo Roman, Elliott Sephus and dancers from Salsa Inferno (Odysseus' Men); Karen Bahena, Lina Bien, Katleen Dugas, Melanie Haag, Paola Kubelis and Stephanie Plascencia (Penelope's Women); and Donna Blochwitz, Jane Klofkorn, Yvonne Lindroth Silva and Amara Marsden (Sirens).

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In Outage, an 'Odyssey' Rehearsal Moves Outdoors

5

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Photo by Sam Hodgson

Lear deBessonnet

Posted: Friday, September 9, 2011 6:02 pm | Updated: 8:36 pm, Fri Sep 9, 2011.

By [Kelly Bennett](#)

Rehearsals are growing more frequent for The Old Globe's "Odyssey," the musical theater piece the theater commissioned in honor of its 75th anniversary. The piece seats people together that might never otherwise cross paths, among them members of a church choir, a hip-hop troupe, frequenters of a YMCA in southeastern San Diego and longtime Globe patrons.

The logistical tangle of lining up more than 200 calendars to schedule rehearsals made director Lear deBessonnet's eyes widen when I bumped into her outside [the potluck dinner last week](#) that officially marked the production's beginning.

Since then, she and composer and lyricist Todd Almond and the rest of the production staff have convened a handful of rehearsals, and gone on a few field trips to the larger groups' regular rehearsals offsite. By the time deBessonnet and I spoke on the phone Thursday morning, she said the bit of terror she'd felt about the planning and details had started to subside. (The play opens Sept. 30.)

This week, the crew visited the St. Stephen's church choir, which is singing the voice of Athena, and the couple of dozen kids from Junior Theatre whose musical piece represents the sound of the underworld.

"When you actually get there, when you're not thinking about a number anymore but when you're looking at those faces, all of the anxiety associated with it melts away," she said. "The beauty of it takes over."

But that was Thursday morning. Before the power outage.

Friday I sent deBessonnet a text message to see if being unplugged ruffled last night's plans, which were to run over music with some of the [Globe Guilders](#), playing Sirens, and Odysseus's men, culled from auditions at the Jackie Robinson YMCA and a Mid-City church's urban outreach program.

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But instead, the people playing the Calliopes — Homer's muse for the "Odyssey" epic — rehearsed music by ear outside in the park, "until they kicked us out!" she said. She texted a picture of Almond at the impromptu practice.



The cancelation disappointed at least one cast member.

"It was one of the Guilders' 76th birthday and she was very sad because rehearsal was what she had planned as celebration," deBessonnet said. "We will all sing to her at the next group rehearsal."

We'll be following this production as it continues to unfold. Friday was slated to be the first regular day of rehearsals with the professional actors who will be joining the community members. Saturday they'll rehearse en masse for the first time.

I'm Kelly Bennett, the arts editor for VOSD. You can reach me directly at kelly.bennett@voiceofsandiego.org or 619.325.0531.

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Embodying a Full Town of People in 'Odyssey' Rehearsal

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Photo by Sam Hodgson

A portion of the cast of the Old Globe's production of "Odyssey" poses for a group photo during a potluck event last week.

Posted: Sunday, September 11, 2011 6:22 pm | Updated: 8:02 pm, Sun Sep 11, 2011.

By [Kelly Bennett](#)

A teenage boy with a mess of curly hair rode a unicycle in circles through a crowd of singing, moving people in the basement of the House of Charm Saturday afternoon.

It was chaotic, and supposed to be. The town of Ithaca, represented in this basement rehearsal room by San Diegans of many stripes, was singing about the loss of its king, Odysseus, who had yet to return from battle despite winning a war a decade earlier.

Lear deBessonnet, the mastermind of the chaos, directing this new version of Homer's "Odyssey" for The Old Globe, stepped into the crowd, pointing here and there and to the back like one of those cartoon characters whose gestures spin them into a tornado.

Only a few of the assembled crowd were professional actors. The rest had come to the afternoon rehearsal for the "Odyssey" production from all over the place: auditions at the Jackie Robinson YMCA, local high schools, dance troupes and a club for Globe supporters. (The crew has begun assembling [the stories of the people involved](#).)

Near the front of the ensemble in a bold purple dress shirt and shorts, demonstrating a hearty amount of passion for his role, was Andre Carter, the financial planner [we met at the potluck](#) a couple of weeks ago. Carter fell into the play when he went to an audition at the Y instead of going to the meeting he'd planned. It appeared Saturday he's eating up his decision.

"The unicycling is *so* fantastic," deBessonnet said to the teen amid the din. In the next breath she called over Penelope's suitors, a motley five men wishing the queen would just get over her missing husband and choose one of them. It was the first rehearsal for the official crew joining head suitor, a park ranger named Kim Duclo, swelling the suitors' ranks to include a policeman, a U.S. Marine, a biotech engineer and the captain of the volunteer ushers at The Old Globe.

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DeBessonnet had an idea. The suitors would add an element of comedic relief to this chaos and actually run through the ensemble, chasing Penelope, played by professional actor Shelley Thomas.

After running through the room herself to demonstrate, deBessonnet called the room to attention.

Think of an event, she said, that brings a whole country together, like when President Kennedy was shot. Imagine what emotion would be on your face immediately after that. This is what the town of Ithaca is going through as they sing the song composer Todd Almond wrote. Its catchy refrain poses questions of devotion, like "How far would you sail to make it home?"

"Each person in this town is a specific person," she said. Each person has a mother, a job, a set of things he or she cares about. Together, they make up a town of distinct personalities.

"I want to see a full town of people," she said.

The rehearsal continued through a storm, a reflective moment while Penelope misses her husband, a realization that a large choir still needs to fit in the room.

"Isn't it kind of hard to picture like 40 more people standing over here?" deBessonnet said, laughing. This week, they'll do more than picture it; the St. Stephen's choir will join the rest of the ensemble on Friday. The production opens at the end of the month.

I'm Kelly Bennett, the arts editor for VOSD. You can reach me directly at kelly.bennett@voiceofsandiego.org or 619.325.0531.

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Lifers and Novices Find Their Own 'Odyssey'

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Photo courtesy of The Old Globe

Darlene Davies, second from right, at a rehearsal for The Old Globe's "Odyssey."

Posted: Monday, September 12, 2011 5:14 pm | Updated: 6:34 pm, Mon Sep 12, 2011.

By **Kelly Bennett**

For local college student Katherine Zamora, cast as part of the ensemble in The Old Globe's "Odyssey," even getting to rehearsals has been [a foreign experience](#):

I haven't been in Balboa Park, here, since I was ten and that was for a book fair, I think. I don't remember. And so I got here, and I called one of my friends and I was like, 'I'm here and I don't know where to go. I'm lost.'

I just remember thinking, this is really sad. I haven't been to the zoo since I was five and just thinking about it, I realize that I probably should revisit all of those places. My parents were really good, when my mom was still a stay-at-home mom we went to Sea World as a family, that was before my little sister. We went to the zoo, a lot of places as a family, because she wanted us to have that experience. And then she started working and she couldn't anymore. And my dad started working more and he couldn't anymore. So, my sister was kind of deprived of all that and that's kind of bad for her. But, yeah, I think I should know San Diego more than I do.

For other members of the cast, Balboa Park couldn't be less foreign; Kim Duclo, playing Penelope's chief suitor, is a park ranger there.

And Darlene Davies, whose Eurynome role gives her six lines to recite, is a fixture at The Old Globe. The theater where the play will be performed is named for her late husband, Lowell Davies.

As she readied her things to leave rehearsal on Saturday afternoon, Davies reminisced.

As a kid in Junior Theatre, which [used to be a spinoff community program](#) run by The Old Globe, Davies acted in several production in the 1950s. The last time she appeared onstage in a Globe production was a Shakespeare play in 1961, Davies said.

"I've been running up and down those stairs since I was 11," she told me.

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But that 11-year-old girl, who grew up to become an accomplished speech pathologist and professor at San Diego State University, felt more at ease reciting lines and acting through words. Musical theater is not her forte.

"They've got me in there, singing and dancing," she said, sounding a bit self-conscious. "Today, it's beginning to click in a little bit."

The production staff, like director Lear deBessonet and writer Todd Almond, are helpful and encouraging, she said.

They are also, she said, exacting.

"There's no pity," she said.

The outdoor stage named for her husband, a longtime Globe board president, has been built in the years since Davies, now 72, performed there as a kid. Other than its christening more than 20 years ago, this will be Davies's first time onstage.

"For me, it is a kind of odyssey — it's almost like an arc of my life," she said.

"To be in Lowell's theater..."

She trailed off.

"How often do we get a chance to revisit those things we do when we're young?"

I'm Kelly Bennett, the arts editor for VOSD. You can reach me directly at kelly.bennett@voiceofsandiego.org or 619.325.0531.

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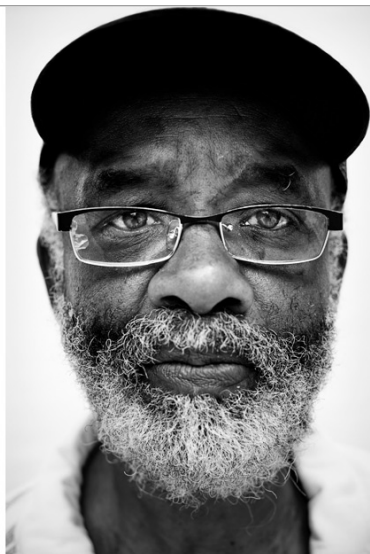
Arts Report: Swelling the Ranks

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Photos by Bear Guerra

Gregory Rogers (left) and Vesta Witherow (right) were both photographed for the (In)Visible Project.

Posted: Tuesday, September 13, 2011 3:50 pm | Updated: 3:49 pm, Tue Sep 13, 2011.

By [Kelly Bennett](#)

San Diego looks different three-quarters of a century after The Old Globe began.

The acclaimed theater brought in noted director Lear deBessonet over the last couple of years to research just how different. She and composer Todd Almond have been folding as many corners of the community as possible into a new production of the epic "Odyssey."

At a [potluck dinner to formally kick off](#) the production, deBessonet surveyed a room of salsa dancers, high-schoolers, a park ranger, posh Globe supporters and guys who'd auditioned for roles at the Jackie Robinson YMCA.

In subsequent rehearsals, the cast has been swelling to include the St. Stephen's church choir, the San Diego Youth Symphony, the drum line from Valhalla High School and a few professional actors, like Alvin Crawford, who's taking a month off from the Lion King on Broadway to play Odysseus.

Facing such a motley group, deBessonet's direction at [a rehearsal on Saturday](#) was compelling:

Think of an event, she said, that brings a whole country together, like when President Kennedy was shot. Imagine what emotion would be on your face immediately after that. This is what the town of Ithaca is going through....

"Each person in this town is a specific person," she said. Each person has a mother, a job, a set of things he or she cares about. Together, they make up a town of distinct personalities.

"I want to see a full town of people," she said.

We've been following this production as it ramps up for its three performances beginning Sept. 30. Last Thursday's blackout pushed one rehearsal outdoors.

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A longtime Globe supporter, Darlene Davies, will appear in the production, onstage in the theater named for her late husband, Lowell Davies. She hasn't been onstage at the Globe since she was a kid, performing in the 1950s and 1960s.

"How often do we get a chance to revisit those things we do when we're young?" she said.



You're reading the Arts Report, our weekly compilation of the region's arts and culture news.

Happening Here

- The Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego's preparing to open its [biggest exhibition ever](#) in conjunction with the Getty's massive, multi-museum show of post-World-War-II art in Los Angeles.

This guy's confronted with that scope every day: Preparator Thomas DeMello has to figure out how to mount an estimated 1,500-pound installation by artist DeWain Valentine.

He told Kinsee Morlan: "It's a large resin sculpture in a diamond shape... and, just logistically, [you can't pick it up](#). It's kind of a nightmare." (CityBeat)

- September is Arts Month in San Diego. You can download and print a [pass for discounted admission](#) to events and museums here, or check out the lists of [events](#), [exhibitions](#), [performances](#) and stuff to [bring kids to](#).

- Barring another blackout, tonight's the rescheduled premiere for "[Working Class](#)," a [documentary](#) featuring artists Mike Maxwell's and Mike Giant's art inspired by the working class. We visited Maxwell's [East County home](#) to feature his art collection, which happened to feature a few pieces by the other Mike, like this one:

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Magic in the Basement in Balboa Park

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Posted: Monday, September 19, 2011 11:51 am

By [Kelly Bennett](#)

On Friday night, I descended to the basement of the House of Charm, following my ears to The Old Globe's rehearsal room. The St. Stephen's church choir was belting out harmonies, being woven into the full "Odyssey" rehearsal for the first time as the play's opening night nears Sept. 30. It added yet another layer to the production's epic-ness.

Here's a peek from my phone camera. Composer Todd Almond is on the left, directing the choir:

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But that's just a peek. (The photograph at the top of the post, taken by Sam Hodgson, is from an earlier rehearsal.) A cameraman from NBC7 San Diego went with me and we'll show you more from the St. Stephen's rehearsal, along with an interview with director Lear deBessonet, in Behind the Scene TV this Thursday at 4:30 p.m. We'll post the clip here as soon as it's available, too.

As I left the rehearsal room filled with all sorts of different people, I [couldn't stop thinking](#) about all the magic that gets made (found, curated, etc.) in the basements of Balboa Park.

Susan Myrland [chimed in](#), responding to my Twitter message:

My favs: the basements [@SDMA](#) and [@SDNHM](#). Mats that take the dirt off your shoes & floors to drain off fluids from dissection.

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The latter, San Diego Natural History Museum, [trumped that](#).

We have basements upon basements...several floors below ground we house one of the world's largest rattlesnake collections

You might remember my fascination with Balboa's basements [isn't new](#). The San Diego History Center pulled out a previously un-catalogued and largely unseen heap of negatives and photographs earlier this year to showcase a collection that had been donated nearly 20 years earlier.

It struck me then that it was just one collection that isn't yet public. Looking at the rows of museums, I began wondering how many boxes and warehouses and basements are filled with photographs and miscellaneous artifacts that most San Diegans don't even know exist.

Have any of your own basement tales to share about Balboa Park? Leave a note below or [on Facebook](#).

More of our coverage of the "Odyssey" production: The first official get-together was a [potluck dinner](#). The [blackout pushed](#) one rehearsal outdoors. Director Lear deBessonet told the group to imagine the individual personality they're playing, [all of whom combined make up the town](#). The cast of 181 comprises newbies and lifers, including the woman for whose husband the [Globe's outdoor stage is named](#).

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Peek in the Basement at 'Odyssey:' Behind the Scene TV

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Photo by Sam Hodgson

Composer and performer Todd Almond (right) directs the run-through of a song from the "Odyssey," an upcoming community production at The Old Globe.

Posted: Monday, September 26, 2011 4:56 pm

By **Kelly Bennett**

My eardrums were recently blasted with the sound of the St. Stephen's church choir singing as the voice of heaven. Thankfully, our friends from NBC 7 San Diego were in the basement rehearsal room with me, and we put together this peek for you. The Old Globe's "Odyssey" production happens for [three nights this weekend](#):



View more videos at: <http://nbcсандiego.com>.

We've been following this play as it gets closer, intrigued especially by this intersection between the institution that the Globe is, and the community groups it involved in this process. Need to catch up on our "Odyssey" coverage?

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- The first official get-together was a [potluck dinner](#).
- The [blackout pushed](#) one rehearsal outdoors.
- Director Lear deBessonnet told the group to imagine the individual personality they're playing, [all of whom combined make up the town](#).
- The cast of 181 comprises newbies and lifers, including the woman for whose husband the [Globe's outdoor stage is named](#).
- Being at the rehearsal where the St. Stephen's church choir joined the ensemble for the first time made me wonder about [all of the other magic that gets created](#) in Balboa Park's basements.

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Arts Report: Unexpectedly Epic, and Sort of Amazing

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Photo by Sam Hodgson

A museum attendee reads the description of "Phenomenal: California Light, Space, Surface," a new show at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego.

Posted: Tuesday, September 27, 2011 3:00 pm | Updated: 3:00 pm, Tue Sep 27, 2011.

By [Kelly Bennett](#)

Lear deBessonnet's what-ifs are becoming "when."

A couple of years ago, deBessonnet, a theater director, began asking San Diegans how they came to live here. The Old Globe commissioned her and composer Todd Almond to create a new musical theater piece to commemorate the San Diego community and the diversity it has developed in the more-than 75 years the Globe has been around. The effort culminates this weekend as a cast of 181 takes the stage Friday, Saturday and Sunday in the Globe's "Odyssey" production — a celebration of the "unexpectedly epic, and sort of amazing" stories people told her of their journey to call San Diego home.

We've been [following this play](#) as it gets closer, intrigued especially by this intersection between the institution that the Globe is, and the community groups it involved in this process.

We still have the songs in our head from the first rehearsal one of those groups, the St. Stephen's church choir, came to. You can hear them, too; just [watch this Behind the Scene TV episode](#).

The cast is big even for deBessonnet and Almond, who've teamed up for this kind of community-infused theater in various cities around the country before. "We might have to [start doing stadium shows](#)," deBessonnet joked. (U-T)

Here's more from deBessonnet in [an interview with the La Jolla Light](#):

We imagined this ideal version of "what ifs" — we had the Valhalla High School Percussion Ensemble or 30 children from San Diego Jr. Theatre come running out from the floor, or Culture Shock San Diego to perform, St. Stephen's Church Choir to sing and be the voice of Athena, or the San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory to score a dream ballet of Odysseus' homecoming?

At one point Todd and I looked at each other like, really? Every outlandish thing we thought of we got, and we're so happy the groups said yes.



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Surprises, Good and Challenging

- Artwork thought to be long-lost from a Modesto post office building was [just hiding in a San Diego shed](#) and will be returned. Another SD connection: The developer buying the now-closed federal building is Peter Janopaul, who [turned the historic El Cortez hotel](#) here into condos. (Modesto Bee)
- The foundation managing the arts district in Point Loma got a refund for the city. We reported last week that now [it wants that money](#) for its next project to cover unexpected additional construction costs. The city's budget analysts support the request; if the NTC Foundation's nearly \$1 million gap isn't covered soon, the [rehabilitation project for eight buildings could fall apart](#).

The [request for more than \\$700,000](#) on top of the city's \$4 million already committed to the project went to City Council on Tuesday afternoon; we'll follow the meeting and keep you posted.



- Architecture students at the NewSchool of Architecture and Design came up with ideas for how the "Surfing Madonna" mosaic could be installed in a building or installation in Encinitas. The students had a surprise guest in the audience when they presented their plans: the [mosaic's creator, Mark Patterson](#). (CityBeat)
- A study pegged participation in the arts in California as [dropping 6 percent](#) between 2002 and 2008. (LA Times)
- The San Diego Symphony wants to make sure people know where it plays by installing a giant [bass clef sculpture](#) outside. (U-T)

Happening Here:

- In case you didn't know, there are a [ton of local theater and music](#) venues. (North County Times)
- The Carlsbad ArtSplash featured a twist on street art — artists making [chalk drawings on the pavement](#). (Snyder Art and Design blog)
- Anthology, the live music venue in Little Italy, will put on an [outdoor concert mini-festival](#) this weekend. (U-T)

Sirens and Thrill as 'Odyssey' Opening Nears

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Photo by Sam Hodgson

Amara Marsden and Yvonne Silva (right) play sirens in the Old Globe's upcoming production of "Odyssey."

Posted: Wednesday, September 28, 2011 6:52 pm | Updated: 7:38 pm, Wed Sep 28, 2011.

By [Kelly Bennett](#)

Four women clad in shiny turquoise gowns and eye-popping green curly wigs sat interspersed in the seats at The Old Globe's outdoor Lowell Davies Festival Theater this afternoon. The women are no strangers to the theater. But usually they're raising money, attending social functions or otherwise boosting the life of the Globe.

But as they don these costumes — applying varying degrees of undergarment strategy, one confides — they become the sirens tempting Odysseus to steer his boat into the cliffs.

Today is Day Two of the technical rehearsals for the theater's new "Odyssey" production. The play opens Friday. It closes Sunday. That means any kinks have to get worked out, like, yesterday. Besides today (a long today that lasts far into tonight), the ensemble just has one dress rehearsal with everyone tomorrow, and then it's time to put on the show.

"It's go time," said director Lear deBessonet, a bit unbelievably.

We've been following this play as it gets closer, intrigued especially by this intersection between the Globe as an institution and the community groups it involved in this process. The theater hired director Lear deBessonet and composer and lyricist Todd Almond to come up with a musical theater piece that could involve a slew of San Diego community members and institutions as well as professional actors. It feels like more than a month since the [potluck dinner that kicked off the "Odyssey."](#) which involves a cast of 181 pulled from auditions at the Jackie Robinson YMCA, local high schools, a couple of dance troupes and a club for Globe supporters, just to name a few.

This afternoon, the section of the stage that moves up and down wasn't working quite right. So the sirens, who must ride the lift up and down while beckoning to Odysseus, were sitting in the seats while a few crew members hopped on stage to fix it.



Meanwhile, the onstage musicians had to move their stuff, and a few wires became unhooked. That meant redoing some of the sound check to make sure they could hear all of the instruments.



While this was sucking up some of the rehearsal time, deBessonnet didn't want to waste a minute. She and a few other crew members practiced with Alvin Crawford, the professional actor playing Odysseus, to experiment with his tear-away clothing that would reveal a white toga underneath.

As they ripped off his pink Hawaiian shirt and khaki-colored pants, an assistant director explained to me the clothing is held together with magnets.

Of course.



DeBessonet said yesterday she was running around, stressed out, when someone stopped her, saying it was clear from the looks on the community members' faces that they were having the "time of their lives."

She said it was an important, clarifying intervention. Everyone who does theater for a living in this production once had something grab him or her and cause them to imagine a life in drama.

"In a normal tech, there are very few moments of collective awe," she said. "Even a special effect or something — it happens, and we say, 'Oh, there's that thing.'"

But here, with 181 people involved, many of whom who've never come to the Globe before, have perhaps never been in a play before, those bits of theater magic elicit uncontrollable applause. Or shrieks from the Junior Theatre kids who'll ride in a box up through the stage.

When deBessonet explained to three kids that they'd be the ones to do that, they couldn't contain themselves. One said, "What?! Can I tell my mom?"

But the excitement only grew when they, in the theater for the first time this week, saw how the mechanics would work.

"I was NOT expecting that!" one of them screeched in joy.

"It's a reminder of what it is that we do in the first place," deBessonet said.

After a little more than an hour, the stage trapdoor was fixed. The women playing the sirens entered as Odysseus's men mimed rowing the boat.

The women ascended the stage, shooting sultry glances at Odysseus, flitting their green-glove-clad fingers flirtatiously.

They sashayed onto the lift and began their choreographed gestures.

"Now we have to let go?" one of the sirens asked, not quite trusting the bar's sturdiness.

From the middle of the seats came deBessonnet's assurance: "Only with one hand at a time."



Catch Up on Our "Odyssey" Coverage

- The first official get-together was a [potluck dinner](#).
- The [blackout pushed](#) one rehearsal outdoors.
- Director Lear deBessonnet told the group to imagine the individual personality they're playing, [all of whom combined make up the town](#).
- The cast of 181 comprises newbies and lifers, including the woman for whose husband the [Globe's outdoor stage is named](#).
- Being at the rehearsal where the St. Stephen's church choir joined the ensemble for the first time made me wonder about [all of the other magic that gets created](#) in Balboa Park's basements.
- VIDEO: St. Stephen's [church choir joined the rehearsal](#) to become the voice of Athena.

I'm Kelly Bennett, the arts editor for VOSD. You can reach me directly at kelly.bennett@voiceofsandiego.org or 619.325.0531.

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Morning Report: Epic Undergarment Strategy

5

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Posted: Thursday, September 29, 2011 7:45 am | Updated: 7:46 am, Thu Sep 29, 2011.

By **Randy Dotinga**

The outfits aren't what these four ladies normally wear to the the-a-tuh: [their gowns are a shiny turquoise and their curly wigs a neon green](#). Yet there they were yesterday, sitting in outdoor seats at the Old Globe after dealing with what our arts editor Kelly Bennett carefully describes as "undergarment strategy."

What's brought this on? A commitment by a community cast — folks like these from the theater world and dozens of other people from local high schools, a YMCA, dance troupes and more. They're all taking part in an unusual production of "Odyssey."

We've been following rehearsals for the production, which finally debuts on Friday. In the words of the director, "it's go time." Our story includes details from yesterday's rehearsal along with links to our previous posts about the process of bringing Homer's words to life through musical theater.

The ladies in question, by the way, play the sirens that tempt Odysseus.

Don't Lookie for These Loos

If you visit San Francisco, you'll see them on the streets: Dark green stand-alone restrooms that serve the homeless and tourists who can't find a handy place to answer the call of nature. They're clean and convenient unless you get worried while you're using them that you didn't actually lock the door properly. (Don't ask me how I know this.)

The city of San Diego has been [trying to bring similar restrooms to town](#) in an effort to clean up downtown, where transients often have nowhere to go except on the sidewalk. Specifically, the city likes the Portland Loo. As CityBeat describes it, it's a "prefab, stainless-steel public restroom, big enough to hold a person and a bike or a mom and a stroller. Eco-friendly with its solar panels and low-flow toilet, its surfaces are graffiti-proof, and a system of louvers allows police to monitor activity inside it without infringing on privacy."

The City Council liked the look of these loos and approved a purchase more than a year ago. But they're not here yet, and a variety of complications may keep them away for months more.

Downtown Library Funding Still in the Hole

The good news: The boosters trying to raise money to finish the downtown library project don't need to raise \$28 million anymore, like they did a few months ago. The bad news: They [still need to raise \\$25.5 million by January](#), KPBS reports.

If donors don't step up, the city will need to either halt the \$185 million library project or find funding for it elsewhere.

A library booster says advocates hope to raise another \$15 million in talks with 41 potential donors. The new downtown library, which will replace the existing run-down central library, is supposed to open next summer.

Indian Tribe Wants to Evict Military Contractor

A small Indian tribe based in the North County backcountry near Warner Springs [wants to rid its land of a military contractor](#) that hoped to train soldiers in an Afghanistan-like environment, CityBeat reports. The tribe says the contractor's 25-year lease is invalid; the contractor, the story says, alleges that the conflict "led to the arson that caused the 14,000-acre Eagle fire in July."



'A Vision of a Unified, Joyful City'

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Photo by Sam Hodgson

Lear deBessonnet

Posted: Friday, September 30, 2011 9:50 am

By [Kelly Bennett](#)

Last night, the 181-member cast for the "Odyssey" convened for the only dress rehearsal it gets for tonight's opening night production at The Old Globe. During a break in Wednesday afternoon's [green-wig-infused logistics rehearsal](#), I had a chance to chat with Lear deBessonnet, who's directing the play, for a few minutes.

I wanted to know: After all of the potential surprises you've baked into this experiment with engaging so many community groups, has anything surprised you this week?

"There is one thing I forgot to anticipate," deBessonnet said.

She took me [back to the potluck dinner](#) that kicked off this effort. The elevators carried people from a handful of community groups down to the Globe's basement rehearsal space. They brought dishes of food to share, and met the people around them, but many of them sat in the groups of people they'd come with.

"Our tendency is to stick to demographics," she said. "So that night, I was watching to see if anyone was eating alone, making sure everyone had someone to talk to."

But in the chaos of this final week of rehearsals, "I can't be doing that," she said.

So it thrilled her the other day to walk outside during a break, where people were sitting around eating lunch. She saw a clump of people here of different ages and neighborhoods and inherent acting ability, another clump there. There was no obvious demographic separation.

"Literally a potpourri," she said. "This is the overwhelming ethos of this production."

The [lines are blurring](#) between the groups who came in to this play as they work to tell this story together. Culture Shock hip-hop dance troupe and high school kids and a park ranger and [ladies who fundraise for the Globe](#) and guys who came from the local YMCA and [the St. Stephen's church choir](#). People who've been able to be at more rehearsals are helping remind their compatriots of cues and entrances. The churches involved are using their vans to help people get to rehearsals.

"They are really taking care of each other," she said.

Now I'm the one remembering something from that night at the potluck dinner. DeBessonnet stood up and [faced the room](#) full of people, each one embodying myriad details and logistics for her to figure out over the following month.

"What we're proposing with this play is a vision of a unified, joyful city," she said. "A place where we can celebrate each other."

Tonight is the [first night of the show](#). I asked deBessonnet: What do you think you'll think when you wake up on Friday morning?

"Wake up' implies that I've slept," she said, laughing. That's probably not a joke.

Catch Up on Our "Odyssey" Coverage

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- Being at the rehearsal where the St. Stephen's church choir joined the ensemble for the first time made me wonder about [all of the other magic that gets created](#) in Balboa Park's basements.
- VIDEO: St. Stephen's http://www.voiceofsandiego.org/arts/article_a937c570-e89b-11e0-b062-001cc4c03286.html" target="_blank">church choir joined the rehearsal to become the voice of Athena.
- Sirens don [turquoise gowns and green wigs](#) and excitement builds for novices and theater pros alike in last days of rehearsals.

I'm Kelly Bennett, the arts editor for VOSD. You can reach me directly at kelly.bennett@voiceofsandiego.org or 619.325.0531.

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Photos: The Sirens' "Odyssey"

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Posted: Friday, September 30, 2011 1:49 pm | Updated: 5:06 pm, Fri Sep 30, 2011.

By [Sam Hodgson](#)

When I walked into the Old Globe's outdoor theater [on Wednesday](#), I was immediately transfixed by a group of women wearing big green wigs and shiny gowns.

It was only fitting that they lured me into photographing them. They're playing the sirens, tempting Odysseus, in the theater's upcoming production of "Odyssey." Kelly Bennett and I [have been following this production](#) as it gets closer. Opening night is tonight.

Here are some of the images from that rehearsal:















I'm a photojournalist at voiceofsandiego.org. You can contact me directly at sam.hodgson@voiceofsandiego.org or 619.550.5664.

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Finding Your Neighbor Onstage at the Globe

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Photo by J. Katarzyna Woronowicz // Courtesy of The Old Globe

The cast of about 200 in the world premiere of The Old Globe's "Odyssey," conceived and directed by Lear deBessonet with music, lyrics and book by Todd Almond. The play runs for three performances from Sept. 30 to Oct. 2, 2011.

Posted: Saturday, October 1, 2011 8:36 am | Updated: 11:58 am, Sat Oct 1, 2011.

By [Kelly Bennett](#)

"Who are you? Where are you from? How did you end up here?"

Journalists often hear complaints from people like our moms or other shoppers in the grocery store that we dwell on negatives, delight in broken systems and prey on pessimistic, if juicy, storylines. Some of this is true. When we're learning to do this job, we're reminded no one writes a story about the thousands of times the airplanes take off successfully; what makes something unusual or newsworthy is the one, tragic, time the plane doesn't take off.

But I wonder if sometimes we're not as good at spotting, or giving time to, the stories that are as unusual as that flight disaster, but unusual instead in their hopefulness or optimism.

Optimistic against the backdrop of some real, big, hard things. Our county is separated. We live in different realms, in 18 different cities just in San Diego County, in still more neighborhoods beyond that, in pockets of interests and race and how much money is in our bank accounts. Even among the "arts community," the niche and neighborhood boundaries are tough to penetrate.

When I first heard director Lear deBessonet and composer Todd Almond were [cooking up](#) this "Odyssey" production, my curiosity was piqued. They went outside the boundaries of a typical play for the Globe, inviting to the stage the choir from one of the oldest African-American churches in town and the Culture Shock hip-hop dancers, the kids from Junior Theatre and the Valhalla High School drumline, to name just a sliver. They found their cast in the middle of the city, and in the ranks of the socialites at the Globe, and through the YMCA in one of the poorest areas of town.

The play opened last night for its [three-night run this weekend](#) with three questions:

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"Who are you? Where are you from? How did you end up here?"

DeBessonnet had found [surprisingly epic](#) stories when she asked those questions to the people she interviewed over the last couple of years, conceiving this play. But what she and Almond and the Globe offered last night through the larger-than-life stories and characters they presented was the exploration of a different, deeper question.

So you came to San Diego. Here we are. How now will we treat each other?

It's not how a man behaves, but how he treats a stranger that's important, one of the musical's lyrics suggests.

The production places Odysseus's men in scary scenario after scarier scenario as they try to get the king home to Ithaca. They battle a one-eyed beast, played by [food writer Troy Johnson](#), who eats men and, he growls, savors the taste of fear.

After all of those troubles, Odysseus returns, disguised as a beggar, to his land. The men who've been making moves on his mourning wife, Penelope, treat him terribly. They're shamed when he reveals it's him, Odysseus.

The scene suggests an alternative way to seeing what we think we know — what if that beggar is a king?

I had a few people ask me why [I've been spending so much time](#) covering this play. I think the thing that really captured my imagination was this intersecting of groups and neighborhoods and races and specialties. The way an institution like the Globe — an important, prestigious, national institution — sought in this effort to define itself in the neighborhood of San Diego. The way dozens of people who likely never see plays there, perhaps didn't even understand what the Globe even is, could not only come but be in the production. The way director deBessonnet and her entire team stared down the logistical one-eyed beast that is coordinating 200 people's schedules and made this work when it'd have been easier to exclude a group or two and get some more sleep.

And the way the story, presented with hip-hop interludes and eerie kids' singing and a unicycle and green-wigged ladies, suggests to us that there's more to living in a place than taking care of just ourselves.

I'm Kelly Bennett, the arts editor for VOSD. You can reach me directly at kelly.bennett@voiceofsandiego.org or 619.325.0531.

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Morning Report: Join a Special Education Investigation & Conversation

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Posted: Monday, October 3, 2011 7:49 am | Updated: 9:07 am, Mon Oct 3, 2011.

By [Scott Lewis](#)

San Diego Unified School District is on the ropes. Battered by [bad bets](#), a poor economy and [reckless financing](#) from the state, parents are being asked to [pick up the slack in wealthier neighborhoods](#) and teachers face another [round of potential layoffs](#).

Amid all of this, it is trying to shift away from educating students with disabilities in separate full-day classes toward a more inclusive model.

Investigative reporter Will Carless is on [a quest to understand special education in the district](#): specifically, the successes, failures or complications of this controversial transition. And he has a plea for you:

I've spent the last couple of weeks trying to figure out how successful San Diego Unified has been in making this radical transition.

My original goal was to write one story that would authoritatively answer that question. But I'm going to try something different, and I'm going to need your help.

I'd like to invite you to come and investigate this subject with me. Let's work together. Help me as I search for conclusions about the successes and failures of San Diego Unified's transition to inclusion.

You can email him at will.carless@voiceofsandiego.org.

Labor Pact Bans Banned

Governor Jerry Brown yesterday [signed into law a bill](#) that will — stay with me here — ban bans on requiring project labor agreements.

First, what's a project labor agreement? Here's [my video explainer from NBC 7 San Diego](#) on how the agreements work and a recent primer Keegan Kyle [wrote up](#).

Across San Diego County, contractor groups hostile to organized labor have successfully gotten voters to ban local governments from requiring these agreements for big construction efforts.

Now, charter cities that do something like that will be in danger of losing state funding for infrastructure projects unless they reconsider. A new initiative in the city of San Diego that just qualified for the ballot — which supporters dubbed the Fair and Open Competition Ordinance — may have some major consequences. Would funding to San Diego projects be threatened by the state and the new law, SB 922, if it passes?

The contractors who support this latest initiative answered that question in a recent FAQ with this: "There is no way to know the eventual outcome. It may face a legal challenge by one or more cities." But in the [Union Tribune story](#), Scott Crosby, president of the Associated Builders and Contractors of San Diego, was more defiant: "To argue that all state funding would be blocked is absurd."

Local building unions called the new law's passage a "[historic moment](#)."

Housing Prices Up But ...



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Housing and economics analyst Rich Toscano [updated his home-price graphs](#) and explains a recent uptick: "while actual prices might have risen a bit through July, the increase was solely due to typical July seasonal strength, and that prices would have actually fallen if it weren't for that seasonal boost."

An Awesome Odyssey

Arts Editor Kelly Bennett, who cultivates our Behind the Scene beat and the popular Tuesday [Arts Report](#) (sign up [here!](#)), was clearly [inspired by the Old Globe's community engagement](#) for the musical "Odyssey" this weekend.

"I had a few people ask me why I've been spending so much time covering this play. I think the thing that really captured my imagination was this intersecting of groups and neighborhoods and races and specialties," she [writes](#).

'Nother Nobel for San Diego Science

Scripps Research Institute scientist Bruce Beutler is one of three [to share the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine](#). Beutler and Frenchman Jules Hoffman "made landmark discoveries in innate immunity — the fast, first-line defense against an invading bacterium or virus," writes NPR. Canadian Ralph Steinman made a related discovery for "adaptive immunity." The three were not working together. The U-T just posted an interview [with Beutler](#).

SDG&E and Fire: Lot's Happening

As we head into the height of fire season, Randy Dotinga pieced together [a reader's guide](#) to both the background and latest news behind San Diego Gas & Electric's four-year struggle with the fallout of the 2007 wildfires. The company has settled more than \$1.1 billion of claims and gotten involved with fire prevention and even supported firefighting capacity. But when will the pressure on the company ease and how will ratepayers be affected?

Chargers Shine (in the Dark) on a Beautiful Day

For about a quarter of the game yesterday, locals with access to Direct TV's NFL package could watch the Chargers game, even though it was blacked out in San Diego. The NFL must have figured it out as the feed soon went dark. But Sam Hodgson's camera did not go dark and [he's got some great shots of the action](#) you missed unless you were there (and as close as he was).

Triathletes Unite!

I finished my first triathlon at Mission Bay on Sunday. Later we discovered that mayoral candidate Nathan Fletcher, a pretty elite athlete, had also competed in it. He was quite a bit faster than me but was apparently [disappointed in the results](#).

I was thrilled I even survived. Fletcher may be a better triathlete for now but I bet I could beat him at a tweet-a-thon.

I'm an elite public affairs typist.

I'm Scott Lewis, the CEO of [voiceofsandiego.org](#). Please contact me if you'd like.

You can email me directly at scott.lewis@voiceofsandiego.org or 619.325.0527 and follow me on Twitter (it's a blast!):

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Arts Report: Who Is Invited to the Party

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By Sam Hodgson

Four of The Old Globe's Guilders, a social group that raises money and support for the theater, played sirens in last weekend's massive production of "Odyssey."

Posted: Tuesday, October 4, 2011 3:45 pm | Updated: 3:50 pm, Tue Oct 4, 2011.

By **Kelly Bennett**

Ever since a basement potluck brought together a bevy of local groups and characters to mount a new production of the "Odyssey," I've [been intrigued](#). In the waning hours before the play took the stage last weekend, director Lear deBessonnet took her eyes away from the [green-wigged, turquoise-gowned ladies](#) for a few minutes to reflect.

The [rehearsals involved so many people](#) who aren't used to performing in a professional theater, yielding important reminders that theater should spark "moments of collective awe."

Many of which there were on Friday, when the play opened to a full house. When I woke up Saturday morning still thinking about the play the night before, I knew [I had to write](#) about it. Here's a snippet:

I think the thing that really captured my imagination was this intersecting of groups and neighborhoods and races and specialties. The way an institution like the Globe — an important, prestigious, national institution — sought in this effort to define itself in the neighborhood of San Diego. The way dozens of people who likely never see plays there, perhaps didn't even understand what the Globe even is, could not only come but be in the production....

And the way the story, presented with hip-hop interludes and eerie kids' singing and a unicycle and green-wigged ladies, suggests to us that there's more to living in a place than taking care of just ourselves.

In an interview with the North County Times, deBessonnet talked about the venture as widening the pool for ["who is invited to the party."](#)

A few readers, commenting [on that post](#) and [on our Facebook page](#), extolled the production, too. The Old Globe [posted some photos](#), like the one the theater provided below of the giant cast.

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You're reading the Arts Report, our weekly compilation of the region's arts and culture news.

Made in San Diego:

- Predating the flash mob craze by several years, the Trolley Dances just commemorated its 13th year of featuring new dance pieces set specifically in locations along the trolley route. Local theater critic [Pat Launer rounded up](#) her favorites. (Santee Patch)

- How will a tiny but mighty local theater "shoehorn" a musical — "with 13 actors playing some 54 characters — into a 49-seat theater about the [size of some people's kitchens](#)?" Theater critic James Hebert looks at Ion Theatre's upcoming musical, a first for the company. (U-T)

- Modeling themselves after the renowned Venezuelan music program El Sistema, which birthed the L.A. Philharmonic's Gustavo Dudamel, the San Diego Youth Symphony's Community Opus project and its Tijuana counterpart hope to [change the way their neighborhoods and communities look](#), through music.

Says one dad in a [U-T feature story](#) on the two programs: "Most of these kids, you would never see them even talk to each other in school — now they are together all the time. They sit together, they share lunch together. And us as parents, we're getting together for barbecues, outings, birthdays. This program is really changing our lives."

I [got a mini-lesson from one of the kids](#) at Lauderbach Elementary in Chula Vista, one of the San Diego program's chief sites, a few months ago for an [episode of Behind the Scene TV](#).

I'm very interested to learn more about this part of the effort: The Youth Symphony has teamed up with some researchers and neuroscientists to track progress "that could provide more definitive, empirical data regarding the program's influence." (U-T)

- As Diversionary Theatre's "Edward II" closed last weekend, its director [contemplated the depth of the local theater scene](#) for Behind the Scene TV.

- In a [roundtable discussion](#) and a [radio story](#), KPBS asked some local arts leaders about how economic hard times affect their ability to survive.

Happening Here:

- What about how independent artists survive? Some turn to crowd-funding, using sites like Kickstarter or Indiegogo, to make a pitch to their friends, fans and families to help them make a particular project. CityBeat [rounded up some local projects](#) in film, music and mustard (yep) that are seeking this kind of support.

You can also [search "San Diego" on Kickstarter](#) to see other local projects that hope you'll pitch in.

- UCSD's 18th project in its Stuart Collection of public sculpture will [implant a miniature house at an angle](#), seven stories up.

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NOVELTY COMES IN EPIC PROPORTIONS IN THE GLOBE'S 'ODYSSEY'

Even the audience will — somehow — be worked into the production

JAMES HEBERT • U-T

Who are you? Where are you from? How did you end up here?

The wandering hero at the center of Homer's epic poem "The Odyssey" fields questions like those with every new shore he's cast upon in his long quest to get back home.

As it happens, playgoers who make their way to the Old Globe next weekend for the theater's sprawling, one-

of-a-kind "Odyssey" musical will be asked to ponder those questions, too.

And the show's key creators, director Lear deBessonet and composer-writer Todd Almond, say such simple inquiries have everything to do with the idea at the center of the community-based production, which incorporates a staggering 200 cast members.

That idea is, in essence, to celebrate the extraordinary stories behind the lives of

everyday San Diegans. The inspiration for it — and for using "The Odyssey" as the vehicle to explore those tales — sprang from deBessonet's talks with people across the community after she was asked nearly three years ago to create a piece timed (roughly) to the Globe's 75th anniversary.

"I felt as though a lot of the stories I was hearing were unexpectedly epic," says deBessonet, renowned

SEE 'ODYSSEY' • E4

FROM E1
nationally for her site-specific work. "Even from people you wouldn't be able to tell necessarily had (experienced) some kind of massive journey in coming here. I felt people's stories really did have that epic quality."

Almond, her frequent collaborator, adds that "there's this running theme in 'The Odyssey' itself about a stranger showing up in a strange land and being asked questions about himself. It's throughout the entire poem.

"So we boiled that down

"Odyssey"

Old Globe Theatre

When: 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 7 p.m. Sunday

Where: Lowell Davies Festival Theatre, Balboa Park

Tickets: \$15

Phone: (619) 234-5623

Online:
theoldglobe.org



A twist in "Odyssey": It will feature some 200 local people from various walks of life. SEAN M. HAFEEY • U-T



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'ODYSSEY' • Audience will be asked questions at door; answers will be featured in show

to three questions that the audience actually will be asked as they walk in. And then (the result) appears throughout the musical."

(Playgoers will jot down answers on a form; the co-creators aren't saying exactly how it'll all be incorporated into the show.)

If that seems a novel twist to a stage play, it's just one of the unusual aspects of "Odyssey." Start with its scale, which is huge even by deBessonnet and Almond's outsize standards. (Their next-biggest previous project was a 60-person adaptation of "Don Quixote" in Philadelphia two years ago.)

"Odyssey," the latest entry in the Globe's ongoing Southeastern San Diego Residency Project, has cast entire artistic and community ensembles in some roles. The St. Stephen's Church Choir, for example, plays Athena. Valhalla High School's Percussion Ensemble portrays the Palace Guard. The



Director and co-creator Lear deBessonnet speaks to the "Odyssey" performers as they get acquainted at a potluck. SEAN M. HAFLEY • U-T

hip-hop troupe Culture Shock Dance San Diego gets to play the vivacious Phaeacians.

DeBessonnet, who jokes that "we might start having to do stadium shows," explains that she and Almond like working from a series of "what if" propositions: "What if a drum line enters? How about a marching band?"

And form follows function. With Culture Shock, for example, "There is that moment (in the story) where Odysseus washes up on the Phaeacian island, which is populated by these incredibly athletic, fun-loving people. (Their casting) actually became a way of telling that story."

Plenty of solo actors, both professional and amateur, also are part of the show. Alvin Crawford has taken leave from the cast of Broadway's "The Lion King" to play Odysseus, the hero trying to find his way home after the Trojan War. Shelley Thomas, who previously worked with deBessonnet and Almond on the project "On the Levee" through New York's Lincoln Center Theater, plays Odysseus' beleaguered

wife, Penelope.

And among local cast members is Darlene Davies (playing Eurynome), who has been involved with the Globe for decades; the production will unfold on the outdoor stage named for her late husband, onetime board president and benefactor Lowell Davies.

As epic in scale as the piece may be, its length is less so: only 90 minutes, with no intermission. ("Neither of us likes to linger," Almond says with a laugh.)

Even so, the show "(re-)ally) is a musical version of "The Odyssey," deBessonnet says. "It really does tell that story. It is set in an imagined version of Ithaca and these other places. It is kind of a funky version of a classical piece."

And while Almond says part of the initial impulse was just "to get as much of San Diego as possible into one room and have a good time," if you squint, you just might spy the outlines of a social statement.

"We are making a proposal with this piece," deBessonnet says. "It's a proposal about how we can be together, how we can enjoy each other and celebrate each other, and really notice each other."

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Theater preview: The epicenter of an epic

San Diego is the focus of Globe's sprawling 'Odyssey' musical

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Director Lear deBessonet addresses the "Odyssey" ensemble at the Old Globe. — Sean M. Haffey

**Written by
James
Hebert**

11 a.m., Sept. 22, 2011

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Who are you? Where are you from? How did you end up here?

The wandering hero at the center of Homer's epic poem "The Odyssey" fields questions like those with every new shore he's cast upon in his long quest to get back home.

As it happens, playgoers who make their way to the Old Globe next weekend for the theater's sprawling, one-of-a-kind "Odyssey" musical will be asked to ponder those questions, too.

And the show's key creators, director Lear deBessonet and composer-writer Todd Almond, say such simple inquiries have everything to do with the idea at the center of the community-based production, which incorporates a staggering 200 cast members.

That idea is, in essence, to celebrate the extraordinary stories behind the lives of everyday San Diegans. The inspiration for it — and for using "The Odyssey" as the vehicle to explore those tales — sprang from deBessonet's talks with people across the community after she was asked nearly three years ago to create a piece timed (roughly) to the Globe's 75th anniversary.

"I felt as though a lot of the stories I was hearing were unexpectedly epic," says deBessonet, renowned nationally for her site-specific work. "Even from people you wouldn't be able to tell necessarily had (experienced) some kind of massive journey in coming here. I felt people's stories really did have that epic quality."

Almond, her frequent collaborator, adds that "there's this running theme in 'The Odyssey' itself about a stranger showing up in a strange land and being asked questions about himself. It's throughout the entire poem.

"So we boiled that down to three questions that the audience actually will be asked as they walk in. And then (the result) appears throughout the musical.

(Playgoers will jot down answers on a form; the co-creators aren't saying exactly how it'll all be incorporated into the show.)

If that seems a novel twist to a stage play, it's just one of the unusual aspects of "Odyssey." Start with its scale, which is huge even by deBessonet and Almond's outsize standards. (Their next-biggest previous project was a 60-person adaptation of "Don Quixote" in Philadelphia two years ago.)

DETAILS

"Odyssey"

Old Globe Theatre

When: 8 p.m. Sept. 30 and Oct. 1; 7 p.m. Oct 2.

Where: Lowell Davies Festival Theatre, Balboa Park.

Tickets: \$15

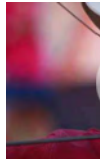
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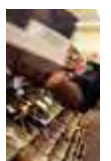
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“Odyssey,” the latest entry in the Globe’s ongoing Southeastern San Diego Be Residency Project, has cast entire artistic and community ensembles in some roles. The St. Stephen’s Church Choir, for example, plays Athena. Valhalla High School’s Percussion Ensemble portrays the Palace Guard. »The hip-hop troupe Culture Shock Dance San Diego gets to play the vivacious Phaeacians.

DeBessonnet, who jokes that “we might start having to do stadium shows,” explains that she and Almond like working from a series of “what if” propositions: “What if a drum line enters? How about a marching band?”

And form follows function. With Culture Shock, for example, “There is that moment (in the story) where Odysseus washes up on the Phaeacian island, which is populated by these incredibly athletic, fun-loving people. (Their casting) actually became a way of telling that story.”

Plenty of solo actors, both professional and amateur, also are part of the show. Alvin Crawford has taken leave from the cast of Broadway’s “The Lion King” to play Odysseus, the hero trying to find his way home after the Trojan War. Shelley Thomas, who previously worked with deBessonnet and Almond on the project “On the Levee” through New York’s Lincoln Center Theater, plays Odysseus’ beleaguered wife, Penelope.

And among local cast members is Darlene Davies (playing Eurynome), who has been involved with the Globe for decades; the production will unfold on the outdoor stage named for her late husband, onetime board president and benefactor Lowell Davies.

As epic in scale as the piece may be, its length is less so: Only 90 minutes, with no intermission. (“Neither of us likes to linger,” Almond says with a laugh.)

Even so, the show “(really) is a musical version of ‘The Odyssey,’” deBessonnet says. “It really does tell that story. It is set in an imagined version of Ithaca and these other places. It is kind of a funky version of a classical piece.”

And while Almond says part of the initial impulse was just “to get as much of San Diego as possible into one room and have a good time,” if you squint, you just might spy the outlines of a social statement.

“We are making a proposal with this piece,” deBessonnet says. “It’s a proposal about how we can be together, how we can enjoy each other and celebrate each other, and really notice each other.”

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Globe's 'Odyssey' features 200-member cast of local actors, artists

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Globe's 'Odyssey' features 200-member cast of local actors, artists

By PAM KRAGEN pkragen@nctims.com North County Times | Posted: Thursday, September 29, 2011 8:00 am | No Comments Posted

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Some of the more than 200 cast members who will be featured in "Odyssey," the Old Globe-commissioned musical event that retells Homer's "Odyssey." Photo courtesy of Jeffrey Weiser



"Odyssey"

When: 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 7 p.m. Sunday

Where: Lowell Davies Festival Theatre, The Old Globe complex, 1363 Old Globe Way, San Diego

Tickets: \$15

Info: 619-234-5623

Web: theoldglobe.org

To grasp the scale of the Old Globe's upcoming musical theater event "Odyssey," peek at this week's final rehearsals, where creator/director/ringmaster Lear deBessonnet is marshaling the show's vast cast by means of a whistle.

More than 200 actors, singers, musicians, dancers and local community members will take the stage this weekend in the world premiere piece by deBessonnet and composer Todd Almond, which retells the story of Homer's epic "Odyssey" in a modern context. The Old Globe commissioned "Odyssey" ---- which plays just three performances this weekend on the outdoor festival stage ---- to celebrate both its 75th anniversary and the city at large.

"Lear and Todd's retelling of this iconic story on such a grand scale is the perfect way to celebrate the anniversary and its contributions to our San Diego community," said Lou Spisto, the Globe's executive producer.

DeBessonnet, 30, a native of Baton Rouge, specializes in creating large-scale theatrical events for communities around the country, including the 2009 "Quixote," featuring the residents of a Philadelphia homeless shelter performing with the punk-Gypsy band The Psalters, and "On the Levee," a multimedia extravaganza produced last year by Lincoln Center in New York.

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"I wanted to meet as many San Diegans as possible to get the fullest picture I could of the community. For that week, I spent 14 hours a day interviewing people, some from the theater world, but also others of every age, race, class and occupation."

DeBessonnet quizzed border patrol agents at the Tijuana border crossing, attended a refugee tutoring session in Southeast San Diego, and went to church in the South Bay. Along the way, she came to love the city and its residents.

"I feel like it's an extended falling-in-love process," she said. "From the very beginning, I was amazed by the generosity I encountered and the quirkiness and humor of so many people."

In each interview, she asked San Diegans how they came to make this city their home, and she was

surprised by the variety of the stories. Some families had arrived via the military after World War II. Some had lived here for generations. Some were newcomers from around the world or from just across the border. It was through the stories of local residents coming "home" to San Diego that she was inspired to re-create the ultimate homecoming story, Homer's "Odyssey."

"Hearing people talking about being reunited with their families here and making their home in San Diego connected to the larger mythical story of the 'Odyssey' as a journey home, with many adventures and mishaps along the way," she said.

Homer's epic "Odyssey" chronicles the trials and adventures that the Greek hero Odysseus faces on his 10-year journey home from the Trojan War. Along the way, he encounters a one-eyed giant, must navigate between Scylla (a rock island) and Charybdis (a whirlpool), visits the Underworld and resists the intoxicating Circe. Odysseus finally returns home disguised as a beggar and must win back his wife, Penelope, and take revenge on the suitors who have been courting her in his absence.

DeBessonnet asked Almond (who composed the score for "On the Levee") to create the music for "Odyssey." They recruited 10 local community and arts groups to play the story's multitude of characters.

"Todd Almond and I were excited about featuring people and groups who can only be found in San Diego as characters from the classic Odyssey story," she said. "When we heard the St. Stephen's Church Choir sing, we thought, 'Well, who better to be the voice of heaven?'"

The 40-voice St. Stephen's choir will collectively serve as the voice of the Greek goddess Athena. San Diego's Culture Shock Dance will play the Phaeacians (mariners); the San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory have scored a seven-minute dream ballet of Odysseus' homecoming; the Valhalla High School drum line will serve as palace guards; and the children from San Diego Junior Theatre will play the spirits of the Underworld. Even the Globe Guilders, a group of longtime theater patrons, have been recruited to play the Sirens (the seductive bird-women whose haunting songs lure sailors to their deaths).

Starring as Odysseus is Alvin Crawford, who is taking a leave of absence from "Disney's The Lion King" on Broadway to play the role, and Shelly Thomas (who was featured in "On The Levee") plays Penelope. More than three dozen nonprofessional local actors make up the rest of the cast.

DeBessonnet said that "Odyssey" is coming together even better than she expected.

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With so much work to put the project together, deBessonnet admits it's sad that "Odyssey" will be performed only three times.

"It's like the city of Brigadoon," she said, referring to the mythical Irish village that appears just one day every 100 years. "For theater artists, even if you have a two-month run, what we do is ephemeral in its nature. That rhythm for these magical out-of-time experiences is just something that you have to make your peace with."

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THEATER

Globe's 'Odyssey' features 200-member cast of local actors, artists



Some of the more than 200 cast members who will be featured in "Odyssey," the **Old Globe**-commissioned musical event that retells Homer's "Odyssey." Photo courtesy of Jeffrey Weiser

By **PAM KRAGEN**
pkragen@ncetimes.com

To grasp the scale of the Old Globe's upcoming musical theater event "Odyssey," peek at this week's final rehearsals, where creator/director/ringmaster Lear deBessonet is marshaling the show's vast cast by means of a whistle.

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WHEN: 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 7 p.m. Sunday

WHERE: Lowell Davies Festival Theatre, The Old Globe complex, 1363 Old Globe Way, San Diego

TICKETS: \$15

INFO: 619.734.5677
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'Odyssey'

Continued from Page 14

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Cast of 200 will perform in musical Odyssey celebrating The Old Globe's 75th anniversary

By Diana Saenger

In celebration of The Old Globe Theatre's 75th anniversary, director Lear deBessonet and writer Todd Almond will premiere a musical theater event, "Odyssey." The work reimagines Homer's epic poem from deBessonet's conversations with San Diegans at large. Commissioned by The Globe, "Odyssey" has a three-day run Sept. 30-Oct. 2 in the Lowell Davies Festival Theatre.



Lear deBessonet directs the World Premiere of 'Odyssey,' a music theater event at The Old Globe Sept. 30-Oct. 2, 2011. Jeffrey Weiser

DeBessonet is an energetic artist who is no stranger to creating big events. Her resume includes "The Scarlet Letter," "My Fair Lady," "Don Quixote," a community-based collaboration with a homeless shelter in Philadelphia that was named in "Best Shows of 2009" by *Philadelphia Weekly*, and more. She was eager to talk about "Odyssey."

Q. "Odyssey" is part of the Globe's Southeastern San Diego Residency Project. How did it originate?

A: I had a commission to create a piece for The Globe so several years ago I came to San Diego to meet as many different San Diegans as possible. Then Todd and I started working on the idea. He wrote the music and lyrics, and we imagined this ideal version of "what ifs" – we had the Valhalla High School Percussion Ensemble or 30 children from San Diego Jr. Theatre come running out from the floor, or Culture Shock San Diego to perform, St. Stephen's Church Choir to sing and be the voice of Athena, or the San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory to score a dream ballet of Odysseus' homecoming?

At one point Todd and I looked at each other like, really? Every outlandish thing we thought of we got, and we're so happy the groups said yes.

Q. The cast features 200 people. How do you pull that off?

A: This is the largest cast I've ever worked with, but once it's above 50 people it's the same whether 60 or 300. You have to be organized in the same ways of directing a parade, pageant or the Olympic opening ceremonies. I do have a stage manager team of four who are the most on-top-of teams I've ever worked with, but necessary since I need to know very hour what we're working on.

Q. You worked with Todd before on several shows including "On the Levee" at the Lincoln Center. What's your collaboration like?

A: There is fluidity between us that makes it possible to do something like this. He's one of the most talented composers of a new generation of musical theater writers, and he has a generous spirit, which this project requires in working with all of these people.

Q. "Odyssey" chronicles the trials the ancient Greek hero Odysseus faces on his long journey home from the war at Troy. Disguised as a beggar he must win back his wife, Penelope, and take revenge on the suitors who have been circling her in his absence. Why was this the story you chose to tell?

A: I spent 14-hour days talking to people all over San Diego – from Balboa Park, the YMCA, border guards, and people taking tutoring sessions – to ask how they came to make San Diego their home. A recurring theme arose that made me think of the "Odyssey," one of our great narratives of a journey toward home, or someone trying to reconcile with their

family.

Q. Does it help that choreographers Tony and Maria Caligagan have Globe experience?

A: Yes. In addition to knowing the space and institution, they have an ease with each other, and with this big of a production, you need two choreographers.

Q. In addition to community groups there are professional cast members as well?

A: Yes. Todd and I worked with Shelly Thomas (Penelope/Circe) before in "On The Levee." Todd knew Alvin Crawford from Julliard and thought he would be the perfect Odysseus. And Todd plays the Singer.

Q. Do you have a favorite element of the show?

A: Every time a new group comes into the room I feel like I'm falling in love with them. They are all so great, especially since among the 47-core ensemble, a lot had never performed a production before. But then we have three female students from the San Diego School of Creative and Performing Arts who blew us away. It will be a terrific event.

If you go

What: "*Odyssey*"

When: 8 p.m. Sept. 30, Oct. 1; 7 p.m. Oct. 2

Where: Lowell Davies Festival Theatre, The Old Globe, Balboa Park

Tickets: \$15

Box Office: (619) 23-GLOBE

Website: TheOldGlobe.org

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Cast of 200 to perform musical 'Odyssey' for The Globe's 75th year

BY DIANA SAENGER

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- **Box Office:** (619) 23-GLOBE
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Lear deBessonnet directs the world premiere of 'Odyssey,' a music theater event coming to The Old Globe, Sept. 30-Oct. 2.

JEFFREY WEISER

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Page 1 of 2

Q&A

Energetic director discusses 'Odyssey'

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Lear deBessonnet

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continued from page B1

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continued from page B1

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tomorrow

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Old Globe's 'Odyssey': It was some trip

Sprawling musical proved a festive (if fleeting) spectacle

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The Sirens do their best to tempt Odysseus (Alvin Crawford, far left) and his men in the Old Globe musical "Odyssey." — Katarzyna Woronowicz



Written by
**James
 Hebert**

3:41 p.m., Oct. 4, 2011

It's taking nothing away from the Old Globe's just-closed Homer epic to note that certain elements of this giddily loose-limbed musical put the "odd" in "Odyssey."

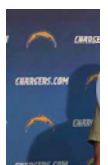
The unicycle, for instance. Or the way the cast prompted the audience to



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do "the wave" at show's end. Or the fact that the actors playing the suitors to the long-missing hero Odysseus' wife, Penelope, possessed an uncanny resemblance to The Village People.

But that's just the kind of vibe the show's co-creators - director Lear deBessonnet and writer-composer Todd Almond - had said they were striving for as they developed [what Almond called](#) "a funky version of a classical piece."

"Odyssey," the first truly local stage creation to spring from the theater's Southeastern San Diego Residency Project, was utterly unlike anything seen in recent memory on the Globe's or any other local company's stages. In numbers that matched the piece's big, boisterous heart (the cast numbered some 200), "Odyssey" brought together a startling diversity of people from the San Diego community.

The St. Stephens Church Choir infused Almond's music with full-throated, gospel-driven drama; the hip-hop dance troupe Culture Shock San Diego showcased crowd-wowing moves; San Diego Junior Theatre contributed a multitalented tribe of performers; the San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory performed a moving serenade to Odysseus's homecoming; the Valhalla High School Percussion ensemble lent that properly martial feel to the show's rat-a-tat climax.

Among solo performers, the Broadway actor Alvin Crawford ("The Lion King") played a very game, often bemused Odysseus, with previous deBessonnet/Almond collaborator Shelley Thomas as the hopeful but world-weary Penelope.

They were joined by such locals as the food writer Troy Johnson (host of the just-debuted "Crave" on the Food Network), gnawing on a manwich and brandishing a giant eyeball as the human-consuming monster Cyclops; longtime Globe benefactor Darlene Gould Davies, back onstage after many years to play Eurynome; and park ranger Kim Duclo, a veritable Balboa Park institution, in uniform as Penelope's first suitor.

No question, elements of the show verged on the goofy. (Consider the scene with Odysseus in serape and sunglasses, or the Phaeacian princess Nausicaa getting courted for the prom.)

But the sense of a community happening was palpable and pretty infectious.

And then it was all over. The show had a total of only three performances, the last one on Sunday.

Almost immediately, deBessonnet and Almond flew back to New York, due to start on their next projects. But before "Odyssey" started to fade into obscurity, I wanted to ask them for some follow-up thoughts on the project and what they learned from it.

One thing they learned very late in the process - two days before opening,



which

**Things**

in fact - was that their idea of having audience members write down answers to three questions ("Who are you? Where are you from? How did you end up here?"), and then somehow incorporating those answers into each performance, just wasn't logistically feasible.

"In terms of what I learned about San Diego," said deBessonnet, "the first thing was that I was unprepared for the level of extreme joy and exuberance people had in them. The moment we said, 'You're free to release that here,' people just exploded. That was very unexpected.

"But it's tied to something else that's very important to me. People (from outside) San Diego said to me, wow, this must just be the happiest city in the world. But it's a very hard-won joy. These are not people who haven't known real adversity and grief and obstacles.

"There's a real grit to that happiness," tied to "the dislocation in families or life situations that brought them here. Just because San Diego is a physically beautiful city, full of internally beautiful people, doesn't mean people here haven't experienced sorrow."

DeBessonnet added that she was pleased with the local casting, and has a special place in her heart for the suitors - who, besides the ranger, included a doctor, a scientist, a policeman and a fireman. (All of those are the performers' real-life occupations except for the fireman, who is actually a Marine; deBessonnet said he couldn't wear that uniform onstage.)

"My assistant director and I were in absolute stitches at every rehearsal because of these guys," she said. "We kept adding more entrances for them, because they were so funny, and so fantastic."

Almond, who with deBessonnet is a veteran of some seriously large-scale shows, said he was surprised at the relative level of order to the production.

"I was anticipating a little more chaos in the rehearsal room, just with that many people," admits the composer, who also performed a major role as the Singer, a combination emcee/bandleader/vocalist.

"Theater is such a time-consuming venture, and it often takes people by surprise if they're not used to it. But everybody was so focused. Everybody really wanted to be there, and took it very seriously. It really allowed us to get pretty deep into the material, I think."

I had to ask Almond about the show's last scene, when Odysseus, having returned from 10 years of wandering the high seas, finally confronts the freeloading suitors. In the actual text, Odysseus and his son, Telemachus, dispatch the suitors in some conspicuously gruesome ways. At the Globe, the suitors were marched off ominously, but without overt bloodshed.

"I debated that exact moment," said Almond. "How violent do we want to get? We need to know these guys get their comeuppance, but ... "

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He added that the stage direction the assistant director came up with "poked a bit of fun at me" for trying to tread that fine line; it said that the ensemble members who surround the doomed characters "help us understand that Odysseus and Telemachus dispatch the cruel suitors in the most permanent of ways."

There wasn't a whole lot permanent about "Odyssey" and its short, colorful life at the Globe. Still, deBessonnet said she's confident the project will leave some kind of legacy among the people it brought together - artists and audiences alike.

"The pain of letting go of these things, it's like a parent sad that their kid is leaving home," she said. "It's a very deep but natural pain. What's encouraging to me is that the relationships do not stop at the end of the three days. In a way, it's the beginning of what's happening for all the new friendships."



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Globe's 'Odyssey' a fun, zany theatrical event

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Globe's 'Odyssey' a fun, zany theatrical event

By PAM KRAGEN pkragen@nctimes.com North County Times | Posted: Thursday, October 6, 2011
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J. Katarzyna Woronowicz

The cast of "Odyssey," a musical theater event that had its world premiere Sept. 30-Oct. 2 at The Old Globe. Photo courtesy of J. Katarzyna Woronowicz





All the world was a stage this past weekend when the Old Globe premiered its musical adaptation of Homer's "Odyssey" featuring nearly 200 San Diego County residents.

The "musical theatre event" ---- conceived and directed by Lear deBessonet with book, score and lyrics by Todd Almond ---- was commissioned by the Globe to celebrate both the theater's 75th birthday and its place in San Diego's firmament. So it was delightful to see such a broad cross-section of San Diego's arts and civic community joining the celebration onstage ("Odyssey" closed Sunday after just three performances on the Globe's outdoor festival stage).

Designed for family audiences, Almond's musicalized adaptation capitalizes on the comic and fantastical elements of the ancient Greek epic poem of Odysseus.

As the story goes, Odysseus sails away from Ithaca and his pregnant wife, Penelope, to fight in the Trojan War. After 10 years of battle, he and his soldiers set sail for home, but a series of storms, imprisonment, and run-ins with temptresses and fearsome beasts delay his homecoming for 10 years. When he finally reaches Ithaca, he learns that Penelope and their now-20-year-old son, Telemachus, have given up hope for his survival and she is preparing to wed one of her eager suitors, so he must slay his rivals to regain his throne.

DeBessonet and Almond cleverly recruited some of San Diego's most talented ensembles to play the various characters in Odysseus's journey.

Members of St. Stephen's Church Choir collectively played the voice of Athena; Riviera Magazine food critic (and Food Network "Crave" show host) Troy Johnson comically played the ravenous Cyclops (who gobbled hot dogs meant to represent the bones of Odysseus's sailors); Valhalla High's drum line played the ceremonial Palace Guards at Ithaca; the San Diego Youth Symphony conducted by Jeff Edmons performed the music for a dream ballet sequence; four of the Globe's Guilders (a senior women's fundraising group) served as the green-haired, silently beckoning Sirens, the birdlike women who lured sailors to their death; and a chorus of small children from San Diego Junior Theatre hauntingly played the Voices of the Underworld.

Best of all was the dance crew from Culture Shock San Diego that electrified the audience with a lively dance number as the Phaeicians (friendly island inhabitants), begging the question, why hasn't Culture Shock been featured more often in local theatrical productions?

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(quite a role switch for Van Dusen, who was last seen as the catatonic teen Tommy in San Diego Rep's "The Who's Tommy"); Alex Monge as the boyish Telemachus; Darlene Gould Davies as the Greek goddess Eurynome; and Dylan Hoffinger as Odysseus's young Captain.

Almond served as the evening's narrator and sang many of the songs, which ranged in style from pop to gospel, opera and tango. His 19-song score had its hits and misses, but some of the best were two comic numbers: Circe's sexy tango "Come With Me" and the tale of the Scylla and Charybdis, "Whatcha Gonna Do?"

Presented without an intermission, the 100-minute show never dragged and was a continuous visual spectacle thanks to Justin Townsend's scenery and lighting and deBessonnet's creative ways of moving the large cast on and off stage, up the aisles and into the onstage balconies.

Although deBesonnet and Almond created this two-hour, site-specific piece to reflect San Diego's multicultural arts community, it's the kind of fun, family-friendly story that could be transported and remounted in any city. While it may ignore the darker and more serious themes of "The Odyssey" (let's call it "Odyssey-Lite"), it was an entertaining and worthy way of celebrating the Globe's beloved place in San Diego.

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"Odyssey"
a comedic
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THEATER

Globe's 'Odyssey' a fun, zany theatrical event

By PAM KRAGEN

pkragen@ncetimes.com

All the world was a stage this past weekend when the Old Globe premiered its musical adaptation of Homer's "Odyssey" featuring nearly 200 San Diego County residents.

The "musical theatre event" — conceived and directed by Lear deBessonet with book, score and lyrics by Todd Almond — was commissioned by the Globe to celebrate both the theater's 75th birthday and its place in San Diego's firmament. So it was delightful to see such a broad cross-section of San Diego's arts and civic community joining the celebration onstage ("Odyssey" closed Sunday after just three performances on the Globe's outdoor festival stage).

Designed for family audiences, Almond's musicalized adaptation capitalizes on the comic and fantastical elements of the ancient Greek epic poem of Odysseus.

As the story goes, Odysseus sails away from Ithaca and his pregnant wife, Penelope, to fight in the Trojan War. After 10 years of battle, he and his soldiers set sail for home, but a series of storms, imprisonment, and run-ins with temptresses and fearsome beasts delay his homecoming for 10 years. When he finally reaches Ithaca, he learns that Penelope and their now-20-year-old son, Telemachus, have given up hope for his survival and she is preparing to wed one of her eager suitors, so he must slay his rivals to regain his throne.

DeBessonet and Almond cleverly recruited some of San Diego's most talented ensembles to play the various characters in Odysseus's journey.

Members of St. Stephen's Church Choir collectively played the voice of Athena; Riviera Magazine food critic (and Food Network "Crave" show host) Troy Johnson comically played the ravenous Cyclops (who gobbled hot dogs meant to represent the bones of Odysseus's sailors); Valhalla High's drum line played the ceremonial Palace Guards at Ithaca;

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Although deBessonet and Almond created this two-hour, site-specific piece to reflect San Diego's multicultural arts community, it's the kind of fun, family-friendly story that could be transported and remounted in any city. While it may ignore the darker and more serious themes of "The Odyssey" (let's call it "Odyssey-Lite"), it was an entertaining and worthy way of celebrating the Globe's beloved place in San Diego.



Alvin Crawford as Odysseus, far left, and the Globe Guilders as the Sirens, top in *The Old Globe's* world premiere of "Odyssey."

Photo courtesy of J. Katarzyna Woronowicz

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The Old Globe

Musical *Odyssey* Premieres



Photo by J. Katarzyna Woronowicz.

In celebration of its 75th anniversary, The Old Globe in San Diego commissioned a musical version of Homer's epic tale *The Odyssey* that made its world premiere on Sept. 30 with two more presentations over the weekend at the Globe's Lowell Davies Festival Theatre. In a unique collaboration of professional artists and members of the community, *Odyssey* featured a cast of more than 200 performers.

Conceived and directed by Lear deBessonet, with music, lyrics, and book by Tom Almond, *Odyssey* reimagines Homer's epic poem as seen through the lens of contemporary San Diego. It chronicles the trials and adventures that the ancient Greek hero Odysseus faces on his long journey home from the war at Troy. Along the way, he encounters a one-eyed giant, confronts the horrifying monsters Scylla and Charybdis, visits the Underworld and resists the intoxicating Circe. Odysseus finally returns home disguised as a beggar and must win back his wife, Penelope, and take revenge on the suitors who have been circling her in his absence.

"Todd Almond and I were excited about featuring people and groups who can only be found in San Diego as characters from the classic Odyssey story," said deBessonet in an Old Globe statement released prior to the production's opening. "When we heard the St. Stephen's Church Choir sing, we thought, 'Well, who better to be the voice of heaven?' Culture Shock San Diego will play the Phaeacians; the San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory will score a dream ballet of Odysseus' homecoming; Valhalla High School Percussion will play the Palace Guard; and the children from San Diego Junior Theatre will play the Voices of the Underworld."

Odyssey was part of the Globe's Southeastern San Diego Residency Project supported by a grant from the James Irvine Foundation's Artistic Innovation Fund. For more information on the Old Globe, go to www.theoldglobe.org.

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*In a unique collaboration of professional artists and members of the community, *Odyssey* featured a cast of more than 200 performers.*

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Journey to a New World

How a cast of 181 very different performers came together—and went on an *Odyssey*

By Eliza Bent



A portion of the epic-sized cast for Lear deBessonet's *The Odyssey*, at San Diego's Old Globe this past fall (Photo by Jeffrey Weiser).

Challenge

To create a theatre of radical inclusiveness.

Plan

Partner with community organizations; host auditions around the city.

What Worked

Tapping into the community's performing organizations; a team of four stage managers.

What Didn't

Traditional rehearsal schedules and e-mail lists don't fit the needs of many non-professional cast members.

What's Next

More community-based theatre around the country.

Brooklyn-based director **Lear deBessonnet** radiates positive energy, but she's had her share of frustrations. "One of my first disappointments making work in New York City was how narrow the audience sometimes felt," she says. She began reaching out to **BronxConnect**, a mentoring program, and **Streetwork Project**, which invites homeless and street-involved youth to performances. But that didn't prove to be wholly satisfying, either. "I'm interested in making a theatre of what I call 'radical inclusiveness,' so I wanted to find a way to expand who had a stake in the work that I do," she recalls. "*Don Quixote* was the start of that."

DeBessonnet's community-based *Quixote* bowed at Philadelphia's **Broad Street Ministry**. It involved both professional performers and community members, including people who had struggled with homelessness. When deBessonnet received a commission from the **Old Globe**, San Diego's flagship theatre, she wondered if she could conduct a similarly expansive event. "It was huge that Lou Spisto and Michael Murphy said yes to this idea—they had a lot of faith," deBessonnet declares, referring to Old Globe's recently departed CEO/executive producer and its interim managing director, respectively.

DeBessonnet first went to San Diego to talk with people in the community. "It was a listening trip," she says. "One question I asked everyone was, 'How did you get to San Diego?' There was a lot of heat in these stories, and I was struck by how so many people, regardless of race or class, had experienced epic journeys to the city they now called home," says deBessonnet, noting how San Diego is both a border and military town. Working on a reimagined version of *The Odyssey* seemed like a fitting project to pursue.

DeBessonnet cites L.A.'s **Cornerstone Theater Company** and Michelle Hensley's **Ten Thousand Things Theater** in Minneapolis, with whom she has worked in the past, as inspirations. "A lesson I draw from Michelle is that in an imagined world, we can all enter as equals. No one has an edge up on how we imagine the Cyclops or the Siren." DeBessonnet's collaborator, composer **Todd Almond**, set to work writing 19 original songs. The next task was figuring out which community organizations would be best suited for different parts of the narrative.

The gospel choir of San Diego's **St. Stephen's Church**, for example, proved perfect for the voice of Athena. Valhalla High School's drum line could serve as the palace guard. The hip-hop dance group **Culture Shock**, deBessonnet determined, would make great Phaeacians, whereas four members of the **Globe Guilders**, well-heeled patrons of the theatre, could play the Sirens. A number of men in uniform enlisted as Odysseus's men. **San Diego Junior Theatre** populated the underworld. "Odysseus's mother was an 8-year-old girl," deBessonnet deadpans. She and her team were intent on getting the word out so that people unaffiliated with groups could also take part in the show. The local YMCA and Harbor Church, dedicated to serving undocumented immigrants, also put out the call.

Auditions, held at the Old Globe and a local trailer park, singled out 50 additional performers to supplement the enlisted groups, bringing the cast to a whopping 181 people.

One gets dizzy imagining the logistics that go into such a project. It's no surprise a stage management team of four was required. Performance groups would work material into their regular practice (the choir, for example, started learning music for the show three months out), and each day various performance elements would be layered into rehearsal. Moreover, three professional actors were in

the mix, requiring special clearance from Equity. “Michael Murphy submitted a request to Equity and it was granted,” says deBessonnet with a sigh of relief, adding that the show was marketed as a special event. There were only three performances. “It’s not the only way to do something like this, but that’s how we did it this time,” the director reasons. The three Equity performers were paid, but the rest of the cast was not. They did, however, receive two comp tickets each. (Regularly priced tickets went for \$15.)

Evangeline Rose Whitlock, the lead stage manager, recalls the potluck dinner that kicked off rehearsals: “How fitting for a company that came from all over the city to sit down at the table and break bread together.” DeBessonnet set the tone for the proceedings. “I talked about how art is usually a mirror of society, reflecting the world we live in with its ills and its joys. Something that excites me about theatre is that together we can forge an idea of where we could be—in a unified, joyful, vibrant city in which we celebrate each other.”

Despite the fact that performers hailed from all parts of the city, those that signed on to *The Odyssey* were keen on making the journey together. Whitlock embodies that generosity of spirit when she notes, “I knew this project would require a certain level of care, compassion and sensitivity to the many different groups of people involved.” With that knowledge in mind, she decided to keep ensemble members informed by phone instead of relying on e-mail. “I knew the life circumstances of everyone in the cast didn’t necessarily lend themselves to regular e-mail,” she adds, joking about how the phone calls often lasted longer than anticipated.

Regularly scheduled rehearsals were also a challenge for some cast members. “The assumption that someone can be somewhere every day at the same time is a middle- or upper-middle-class assumption,” reasons deBessonnet, who points out that a number of performers didn’t have cars and had to rely on public transit to get to rehearsals. When cast members’ childcare fell through, kids were invited to rehearsals, which deBessonnet attests worked surprisingly well for all parties.

For Whitlock, the constant ebb and flow of problem-solving with the cast—not to mention Hurricane Irene, which threatened to ground the creative team in New York; the San Diego blackout, which cancelled a night of rehearsal; and a desperate search for a Cyclops who could do all performances—added meaning to the art-making. “Part of the reason for doing this show,” she says, “was to empower people to better lives and futures through the art of theatre. My role as stage manager was expanded and redefined in this process. I’d do it again in a heartbeat.”

Even with the phone calls to all 181 cast members? “They each had a story to share and were part of a life-changing creative process. In that sense, the stakes were raised. We just kept pushing through, and the final product was something beautiful, inspiring and joyous.”

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Journey to a New World



BY ELIZA BENT

How a cast of 181 very different performers came together—and went on an Odyssey

A portion of the epic-sized cast for Lear deBessonet's *The Odyssey*, at San Diego's Old Globe this past fall.

JEFFREY WEISER

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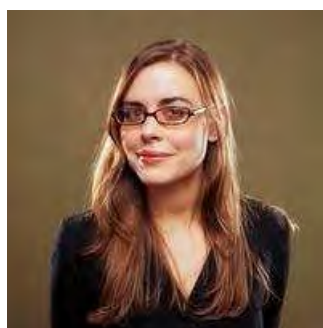
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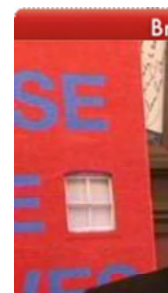


Executive Producer Lou Spisto today announced that theater director Lear deBessonet and writer Todd Almond have developed a new music theater event, *Odyssey*, in celebration of The Old Globe's 75th anniversary. Commissioned by the Globe two years ago, the new work reimagines Homer's epic poem as seen through the lens of contemporary San Diego. Conceived and directed by deBessonet with music, lyrics and book by Almond, *Odyssey* will be performed through a unique collaboration between professional artists and community partners from the San Diego region. *Odyssey* will be presented on Sept. 30 and Oct. 1 and 2 in the Globe's Lowell Davies Festival Theatre.

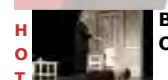
"The Globe began in 1935 as part of the California Exposition celebration," said Executive Producer Lou Spisto. "From those roots and a strong commitment from the community, the theater became an integral part of the fabric of San Diego, operating as both a community and professional theater for many years. At the time of its founding, this institution reflected the community of its time. This project celebrates a more diverse San Diego today, and I felt that it was absolutely essential to include our partners in Southeastern San Diego and the community at large in this theatrical celebration."

Spisto continued: "I approached Lear two years ago because of her successful collaborations with communities and her unique voice, and Todd is one of the most exciting writers working in musical theater today. Their retelling of this iconic story is the result of countless meetings we have had with members of the community that will honor both The Old Globe and San Diego."

Odyssey is part of the Globe's Southeastern San Diego Residency Project supported by a grant from the James Irvine Foundation's Artistic Innovation Fund. Lear deBessonet (Director) has created large-scale site-specific theatrical events pairing artistic excellence with community organizing in New York, Philadelphia, Minneapolis, Kazakhstan and Cambodia. In 2006 she was named one of Time Out New York's 25 People to Watch, and in 2008 she was honored with the first annual Presidential Award for Artistic Excellence by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council alongside Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Edward Albee. She most recently conceived and directed *On the Levee* for Lincoln Center Theater/LCT3 (seven Audelco nominations, Time Out Best of 2010). In May 2009, her site-specific *Don Quixote*, a community-based collaboration with homeless shelter Broad Street Ministry and the punk-gypsy ensemble The Psalters, premiered in Philadelphia and was named in "Best Shows of 2009" by Philadelphia Weekly. Other recent work includes a country-blues adaptation of Bertolt Brecht's *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* at PS122, transfigures, produced Off Broadway by Women's Project, and *Death Might Be Your Santa Claus*, a site-specific work performed at an abandoned bank next to the New York Stock Exchange. Other credits include *In the Dark Ages* (National Opera and Ballet Theatre of Kazakhstan), *The Scarlet Letter* (Intiman Theatre), *Monstrosity* (Thirteen Playwrights, Inc.), *My Fair Lady* (Ten Thousand Things), *Oliver!* (New York University Experimental Theatre Wing) and *When I Was a Ghost* (Guthrie Theater). She has worked with writers Marcus Gardley, Naomi Iizuka, Deborah Stein and Lucy Thurber. She has assisted Martha Clarke, Anne Bogart, Bartlett Sher and Theatre du Soleil and is an alumna of the Drama League Director's Project, the Women's Project Directors Lab and the Soho Repertory Theater Writer/Director Lab. A recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts/Theatre Communications Group Director's Fellowship, she has also acted as a visiting professor at Tisch School of the Arts at NYU.



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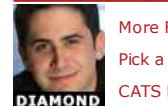


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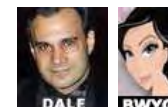
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Todd Almond (Music, Lyrics and Book) is a composer, lyricist and playwright. His musicals include *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (Yale Repertory Theatre, with playwright Adam Bock, directed by Anne Kauffman), *On the Levee* (Lincoln Center Theater/LCT3, directed by Lear deBessonet), *Girlfriend* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre, with songwriter Matthew Sweet, directed by Les Waters, Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award for Best Book of a Musical), *People Like Us* (directed by Gus Kaikkonen), *Ahraihsak* (Theater Mitu, directed by Ruben Polendo) and *Kansas City Choir Boy* (directed by Sam Gold). Almond served as Music Director for the world premiere of Michael John LaChiusa's *Tres Niñas*, and he has written musicals for both The Juilliard School and The Graduate School of Arts and Science of New York University. He has also music-directed and reconceived classic works, most notably *Hair* at the Skirball Cultural Center. In addition to having some of the theater world's top singers perform his music (Sherie Rene Scott, Victoria Clark, Cheyenne Jackson, Jayne Houdyshell, Laura Benanti and more), Almond regularly performs his own material in New York City's top venues and he recently released a CD of original songs entitled *Mexico City*. He has been an Artist-in-Residence at Sundance (both the Utah Playwrights Conference and the Ucross Playwrights' Retreat), Vassar College (with New York Theatre Workshop) and The Orchard Project. Almond is currently collaborating with Warren Leight and Stafford Arima on a musical adaptation of John Knowles' novel *A Separate Peace*.


LOCATION: The Old Globe is located in San Diego's Balboa Park at 1363 Old Globe Way. There are numerous free parking lots available throughout the park. Valet parking is also available (\$10). For additional parking information visit www.BalboaPark.org.


CALENDAR: *Life of Riley* (4/30-6/5), *August: Osage County* (5/7-6/12), *Much Ado About Nothing* (5/29-9/24), *The Tempest* (6/5-9/25), *Amadeus* (6/12-9/22), *Hershey Felder as George Gershwin Alone* (7/1-7/10), *Hershey Felder in Maestro: The Art of Leonard Bernstein* (7/15-8/28).

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THEATER NEWS

>> ARCHIVES

Todd Almond, Alvin Crawford, et al. Set for Old Globe's *Odyssey*

By: **Brian Scott Lipton** · Sep 1, 2011 · San Diego

The Old Globe Theatre will present *Odyssey*, which reimagines Homer's epic poem as seen through the lens of contemporary San Diego, to run September 30-October 2.

The show is conceived and directed by Lear deBessonet, with music, lyrics, and book by Todd Almond, who will also appear as The Singer.

Alvin Crawford will star as Odysseus and Shelley Thomas will play Penelope/Circe. The performance will also feature over 200 people, including members of St. Stephen's Church Choir, Culture Shock Dance San Diego, The San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory, The Valhalla High School Percussion Ensemble, and The San Diego Junior Theatre

The creative team includes Tony and Maria Caligagan (choreography), Justin Townsend (sets and lighting), Paul Carey (costumes), and Paul Peterson (sound).

For tickets and information, call 619-23-GLOBE or visit www.TheOldGlobe.org.



Todd Almond
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The Old Globe's ODYSSEY to Feature a Cast of 200



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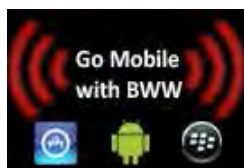


Executive Producer [Lou Spisto](#) today announced the San Diego Community Partners with which director [Lear deBessonet](#) and writer [Todd Almond](#) have developed a new music theater event, *Odyssey*, in celebration of [The Old Globe's](#) 75th anniversary. Commissioned by the Globe, the new work reimagines Homer's epic poem as seen through the lens of contemporary San Diego. Conceived and directed by deBessonet with music, lyrics and book by Almond, *Odyssey* will be performed through a unique collaboration between professional artists and members of the community. *Odyssey* will be presented on Friday, Sept. 30 and Saturday, Oct. 1 at 8:00 p.m. and Sunday, Oct. 2 at 7:00 p.m. in the Globe's Lowell Davies [Festival Theatre](#). Tickets can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park.

Featuring a cast of over 200 performers, *Odyssey* chronicles the trials and adventures that the ancient Greek hero Odysseus faces on his long journey home from the war at Troy. Along the way, he encounters a one-eyed giant, confronts the horrifying monsters Scylla and Charybdis, visits the Underworld and resists the intoxicating Circe. Odysseus finally returns home disguised as a beggar and must win back his wife, Penelope, and take revenge on the suitors who have been circling her in his absence.

"Lear and Todd's retelling of this iconic story on such a grand scale is the perfect way to celebrate the Globe's 75th anniversary and its contributions to our San Diego community," said Spisto. "I am delighted that our partners in Southeastern San Diego and so many people from the community at large are taking part in our theatrical celebration."

"[Todd Almond](#) and I were excited about featuring people and groups who can only be found in San Diego as characters from the classic *Odyssey* story," said deBessonet. "When we heard the St. Stephen's Church Choir sing, we thought 'Well, who better to be the voice of heaven?' Culture Shock Dance San Diego will play the Phaeacians, the San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory will score a dream ballet of Odysseus' homecoming, the Valhalla High School Percussion Ensemble will play the Palace Guard



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and the children from San Diego Junior Theatre will play the Voices of the Underworld."

Odyssey is part of the Globe's Southeastern San Diego Residency Project supported by a grant from the James Irvine Foundation's Artistic Innovation Fund.

Professional actors [Alvin Crawford](#) and [Shelley Thomas](#) will star as Odysseus and Penelope/Circe, respectively, along with [Todd Almond](#) as The Singer.

The creative team includes Tony and Maria Caligagan (Choreographers), [Justin Townsend](#) (Scenic and Lighting Design), [Paul Carey](#) (Costume Design), [Paul Peterson](#) (Sound Design) and Evangeline Whitlock (Stage Manager).

The nonprofessional cast, comprised of members of the San Diego community, includes Darlene Davies (Eurynome), Kim Duclo (Penelope's First Suitor), Michael Garcia (Prince), Dylan Hoffinger (Odysseus' Captain), Martin Martiarena (Dude with Guitar), [Lorenzo Martinez](#) (Elpenor), Alex Monge (Telemachus), Davina Van Dusen (Nausicaa), Victoria Matthews, Jordon Scowcroft and Katie Ward (The Calliopes) and dancers from Salsa Inferno (Circe's Ladies) with Diana Bahena, Anay Barajas, Jessica Brandon, Dalaysia Cannon, Ashley Dixon, Richard Dobbs, Deja Fields, Renee Gandola, Zyanya Hernandez-Grant, Carson McCalley, Karen Olinga, Al Simmons, Hannah Trujillo, Katherine Zamora and Ayerton Zoutendijk (Ithacans/Ensemble); Kenn Burnett, Leland Campbell, Eduard Cao, Andre A. Carter, Will Herrera, Dylan Hoffinger, [Lorenzo Martinez](#), Leo Roman, Elliott Sephus, Lamine Thiam and dancers from Salsa Inferno (Odysseus' Men); Karen Bahena, Lina Bien, Katleen Dugas, Paola Kubelis and Stephanie Plascencia (Penelope's Women); and Donna Blochwitz, Jane Klofkorn, Yvonne Lindroth Silva and Amara Marsden (Sirens).

Odyssey will also feature performances by the following five Community Partner Groups, who have been woven into the narrative of the show:

Culture Shock San Diego (The Phaeacians) - Culture Shock San Diego is a not-for-profit hip-hop dance troupe dedicated to innovative performance, artist development and community enrichment. www.cultureshockdance.org/sandiego

San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory (The Dream Ballet) - San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory instills excellence in the musical and personal development of students through rigorous and inspiring musical training experiences, enriching the community through programs and collaborations that increase access to and appreciation of classical music. www.sdys.org

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San Diego Junior Theatre (Voices of the Underworld) - The San Diego Junior Theatre provides engaging, innovative, high-quality theatre education and productions for children of all cultural heritages, ages, abilities and levels of interest. www.juniortheatre.com

St. Stephen's Church Choir (Athena) - The St. Stephen's Church Choir performs at St. Stephen's Cathedral in San Diego. www.ststephenscogic.org

Valhalla High School Percussion Ensemble (Palace Guard) - The Valhalla High School Percussion Ensemble performs with the school's Concert and Symphonic Bands as well as the Marching Band and in percussion ensembles and solos throughout the school year. www.vhsmusic.org/home

The following Community Partners played host to the scores of San Diegans who came to audition for Odyssey:

Harbor Church - Harbor Church is located in mid-city San Diego and bridges cultures through understanding. www.harbormidcity.org

The Jackie Robinson Family YMCA - The Jackie Robinson Family YMCA works to offer a critical foundation to young people through sports and character development. www.jackierobinson.ymca.org

Globe Guilders - The Globe Guilders provides funds towards [The Old Globe's](#) artistic and education programs, promotes membership in the theatre and encourages service in the volunteer activities essential to the operation and growth of the Globe. www.globeguilders.org

San Diego School of Creative and Performing Arts - The San Diego School of Creative and Performing Arts is the San Diego Unified School District's premier college-prep arts-focused school for students in grades 6 through 12. www.sandi.net/scpa

UrbanLife - UrbanLife is an organization dedicated to serving middle, high and college students in San Diego. www.urbanlifesd.org

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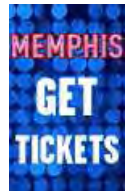
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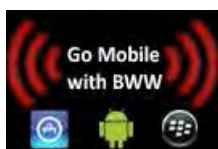


Photo Flash: Old Globe's ODYSSEY Takes the Stage



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ODYSSEY is now playing [The Old Globe's](#) Lowell Davies [Festival Theatre](#), through Sunday, October 2, 1011, with music, lyrics and book by [Todd Almond](#). The play was conceived and directed by [Lear deBessonnet](#).

Odyssey is a music theater event that chronicles the trials and adventures that the ancient Greek hero Odysseus faces on his long journey home from the war at Troy. It is the World Premiere.

The show's creative team is Tony Caligagan and Maria Caligagan (Movement), [Justin Townsend](#) (Scenic and Lighting Design), [Paul Carey](#) (Costume Design), [Paul Peterson](#) (Sound Design) and Evangeline Whitlock (Stage Manager) and the cast includes [Todd Almond](#) (The Singer), [Alvin Crawford](#) (Odysseus) and [Shelley Thomas](#) (Penelope, Circe); and Darlene Gould Davies (Eurynome), Kim Duclo (Penelope's First Suitor), Michael Garcia (Prince), Dylan Hoffinger (Odysseus' Captain), [Roy Johnson](#) (Cyclops), Martín Martiarena (Dude with Guitar), Alex Monge (Telemachus), Davina Van Dusen (Nausicaa) and Victoria Matthews, Jordon Scowcroft and Katie Ward (The Calliopes) with Diana Bahena, Anay Barajas, Jessica Brandon, Dalaysia Cannon, Ashley Dixon, Richard Dobbs, Deja Fields, Renée Gándola, Zyanya Hernandez-Grant, Carson McCalley, Karen Olinga, Elliott Sephus, Al Simmons, Hannah Trujillo, Katherine Zamora and Ayerton Zoutendijk (Ithacans); Karen Bahena, Lina Bien, Kathleen Dugas, Paola Kubelis and Stephanie Plascencia (Penelope's Women); Eduardo Bravo, Kenn Burnett, Leland Campbell, Eduard Cao, André A. Carter, William Herrera, [Lorenzo Martinez](#), Leonel Roman and Lamine Thiam (Odysseus' Men); members of Salsa Inferno (Circe's Lair); Donna Blochwitz, Jane Klokorn, Yvonne Lindroth Silva and Amara Marsden (Sirens); and Kim Dulco, Kent Gándola, [Craig Hunter](#), Terrence Johnson and [Mark Keller](#) (Penelope's Suitors); and members of the Globe's Community Partners: Culture Shock San Diego, San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory, San Diego Junior Theatre, St. Stephen's Church Choir and Valhalla High School Percussion.

BOX OFFICE WINDOW HOURS: Noon to final curtain Tuesday through Sunday. [American Express](#), Discover, MasterCard and VISA accepted. (619) 23-GLOBE [234-5623]

LOCATION: [The Old Globe](#) is located in San Diego's Balboa Park at 1363 Old Globe Way. Free parking is available throughout the park. Valet parking is also available (\$10). For parking information visit [www.BalboaPark.org](#).

View photos of the production below!

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[Alvin Crawford](#) & [Shelley Thomas](#)

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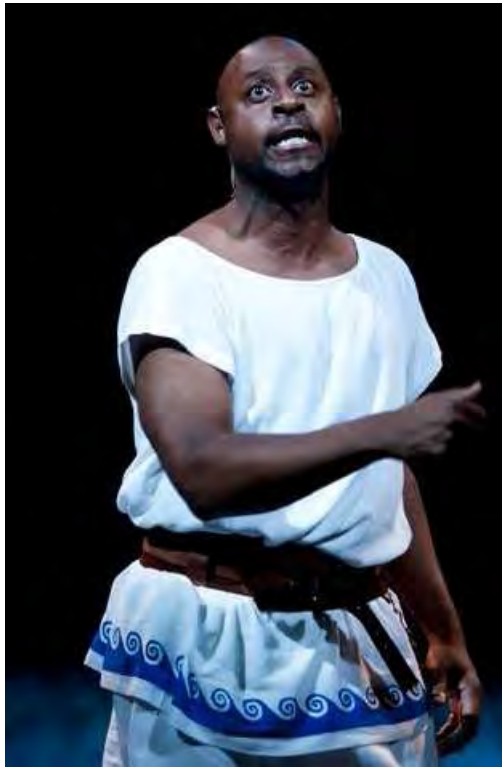
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entertainment were: Earth Wind & Fire, the Commodores, Charlie Wilson, Color Me Badd, Sugar Hill Gang, Sister Sledge, Vanilla Ice and Turbo B.

BENEFIT READING of *Volpone* by Ben Jonson. Jese Berger directs F. Murray Abraham, Helen Carey, Richard Easton, Jay O. Sanders, and Michael Urie.

The greatest of the Jacobean satires skewers humanity's greed and hypocrisy with guffaws and hilarity.

This reading will take place at Playwrights Horizons Mainstage Theater, NYC on Monday October 10th. This reading is a benefit and all proceeds go to support the 2011-2012 season at Red Bull Theater.

Patrons have the opportunity to party with the actors, special guests Emily Bergl, Robert Cuccioli, Larry Pine, Everett Quinton, Matthew Rauch, Laila Robins, Derek Smith and John Douglas Thompson & more follows the reading. There is also a party & VIP Pre-Show Cocktails event.



DUPLICATE MUSICALS DEVELOP GREEK TRAGEDY

Everyone knows Troy was a happenin' town and that guy Odysseus just begged to have a tune wrapped around his trek home. The Battle of Troy (1250 BC), that 10 year scuffle between the Greeks and Trojans, which some naysayers maintain was nothing more than a literary exercise rather than an historical event, is considered significant.

If you want more excitement you'd have to jump to the Peloponnesian War, that conflict between Athens and Sparta that broke out in 431 and continued, with an interruption, until 404, thus enabling them to be called Peloponnesian War I and II.



Perhaps then, it shouldn't have come as a shock that on both coasts, at the same time, two world premiere musicals with the same name, with the same description, on this historical issue are being mounted during the same month.

The Greek tragedy of it all.

In one corner - that would be The Old Globe Theatre in San Diego - there is *Odyssey*, billed as a world premiere musical by Todd Almond and Lear deBessonet. The subject matter: "*Odyssey* chronicles the trials and adventures that the ancient Greek hero Odysseus faces on his long journey home from the war at Troy."

In the other corner that would be American Theatre of Actors in New York City - there is *Odyssey*, billed as a world premiere musical written by Matt Britten and Dimitri Landrain. The subject matter: "Odysseus' epic journey home after the Trojan War."

The Old Globe staging is a really big deal with a cast of 200.



Alvin Crawford as Odysseus (left), the Globe Guilders as the Sirens (top) and the cast of the World Premiere of *Odyssey* at The Old Globe in San Diego. Photo by J. Katarzyna Woronowicz.

For the San Diego company "*Odyssey* is the culmination of a two-year project with the community and is a part of the Globe's Southeastern San Diego Residency Project."

Executive Producer Lou Spisto announced the San Diego Community Partners with which director Lear deBessonet and writer Todd Almond have developed a new music theater event, *Odyssey*, in celebration of The Old Globe's 75th anniversary.

Commissioned by the Globe, the new work reimagines Homer's epic poem as seen through the lens of contemporary San Diego.

Conceived and directed by deBessonet with music, lyrics and book by Almond, *Odyssey* is being performed this week-end through a unique collaboration between professional artists and members of the community.

Featuring a cast of over 200 performers, "*Odyssey* chronicles the trials and adventures that the ancient Greek hero Odysseus faces on his long journey home from the war at Troy.

Along the way, he encounters a one-eyed giant, confronts the horrifying monsters Scylla and Charybdis, visits the Underworld and resists the intoxicating Circe.

Odysseus finally returns home disguised as a beggar and must win back his wife, Penelope, and take revenge on the suitors who have been circling her in his absence."

"Lear and Todd's retelling of this iconic story on such a grand scale is the perfect way to celebrate the Globe's 75th anniversary and its contributions to our San Diego community," said Spisto. "I am delighted that our partners in Southeastern San Diego and so many people from the community at large are taking part in our theatrical celebration."



Shelley Thomas (center) as Circe with the cast of the World Premiere of *Odyssey*, conceived and directed by Lear deBessonet at The Old Globe in San Diego. Photo by J. Katarzyna Woronowicz.

"Todd Almond and I were excited about featuring people and groups who can only be found in San Diego as characters from the classic *Odyssey* story," said deBessonet. "When we heard the St. Stephen's Church Choir sing, we thought 'Well, who better to be the voice of heaven?' Culture Shock Dance San Diego will play the Phaeacians, the San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory will score a dream ballet of Odysseus'

homecoming, the Valhalla High School Percussion Ensemble will play the Palace Guard and the children from San Diego Junior Theatre will play the Voices of the Underworld."

Professional actors Alvin Crawford and Shelley Thomas star as Odysseus and Penelope/Circe, respectively, along with Todd Almond as The Singer.

The creative team includes Tony and Maria Caligagan (Choreographers), Justin Townsend (Scenic and Lighting Design), Paul Carey (Costume Design), Paul Peterson (Sound Design) and Evangeline Whitlock (Stage Manager).



(front, from left) Michael Garcia as the Prince and Alvin Crawford as Odysseus with members of San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory in the World Premiere of *Odyssey*. Photo by J. Katarzyna Woronowicz.

The nonprofessional cast, comprised of members of the San Diego community, includes;

Darlene Davies (Eurynome), Kim Duclo (Penelope's First Suitor), Michael Garcia (Prince), Dylan Hoffinger (Odysseus' Captain), Martin Martiarena (Dude with Guitar), Lorenzo Martinez (Elpenor), Alex Monge (Telemachus), Davina Van Dusen (Nausicaa), Victoria Matthews, Jordan Scowcroft and Katie Ward (The Calliopes) and dancers from Salsa Inferno (Circe's Ladies) with Jessica Brandon, Dalaysia Cannon, Ashley Dixon, Richard Dobbs, Deja Fields, Renee Gandola, Zyanya Hernandez-Grant, Carson McCalley, Karen Olinga, Al Simmons, Beverly Taylor-Wintence, Lamine Thiam, Hannah Trujillo and Ayerton Zoutendijk (Ithacans/Ensemble); Kenn Burnett, Leland Campbell, Eduard Cao, Andre A. Carter, Sergio Castro, Will Herrera, Dylan

Hoffinger, Lorenzo Martinez, Leo Roman, Elliott Sephus and dancers from Salsa Inferno (Odysseus' Men); Karen Bahena, Lina Bien, Katleen Dugas, Melanie Haag, Paola Kubelis and Stephanie Plascencia (Penelope's Women); and Donna Blochwitz, Jane Klofkorn, Yvonne Lindroth Silva and Amara Marsden (Sirens).

In New York City *Odyssey – The Epic Musical*, is billed as "a thrilling new musical adventure that follows Odysseus' epic journey home after the Trojan War," written by Matt Britten and Dimitri Landrain.

Matt Britten directs a cast of twenty-seven, including Josh A. Davis, Emma Zaks, Janine DiVita, Eddie Krobich, Colleen Zenk, Colleen Ballinger, Johnnie Moore, Tramaine Montell Ford, Otto Walberg, Lena Cigleris, Christian Leadley, Benjamin Slater, Jonathan Grunert, Henry Kaiser, Alex Krasser, Curry Whitmire, Isaac Elkiss, Jeff Smith, Ariana Scoggins, Emily Wilk, Erica Lustig, Lauren Luciano, Jay Paranada, and Drew Moerlein, as well as aerialists Kristine Petrucione, Elizabeth Munn and Kimmy Suzuki.



The release states: "Odysseus dreams of the dawn of a new era, in which mortals have control over their own destinies. But when the evil lord Poseidon turns Odysseus' dream into a nightmare, it will take every last ounce of a hero's strength, courage, and wisdom to restore order to Ithaca.



Colleen Zenk: the Emmy

"Based on the classic poem by Homer, *Odyssey* is a thrilling musical adventure that follows Odysseus' epic journey home after the Trojan War.

"Join Odysseus as he encounters the lotus-eaters, outwits the Cyclops, resists the Sirens and battles the gods in a quest to return home to his wife and son. With an exciting original score and dazzling visual design, including an array of aerialists, this breakthrough production presents "the best story ever written" as it has never been told before."

This version has performances at the American Theatre of Actors, in The Big Apple from

Friday, October 21st through Sunday, October 30th.

Despite the similarities, the theatrical community hasn't started their own Greek War.

"No conflict," responded Jeffrey Weiser speaking for The Old Globe. "They are two different projects. Homer's *Odyssey* has been interpreted in many forms over the centuries and will continue to inspire artists in the future."



THE DR. CONRAD MURRAY TRIAL UNLEASHES MICHAEL JACKSON GHOSTS

It doesn't matter if you revile Michael Jackson's personal life or are obsessed in a belief that he was the greatest performer who ever lived. The photo of him lying dead on a hospital gurney and the playing of the slurred, almost incoherent tapes of Jackson talking about his upcoming London engagements are heart wrenching. Both were put into evidence in the involuntary manslaughter trial of Dr Conrad Murray, 58, who is being defended by Houston attorney Edward Chernoff. At the time of Jackson's death, Murray also maintained a Las Vegas practice.

Murray has pleaded not guilty to involuntary manslaughter, but he faces up to four years in prison if the jury finds him responsible for Jackson's death because of inadequate care.



Prosecution evidence - Michael Jackson lying on a hospital gurney in the screen grab from Getty Images

The King of Pop, a creatively adventurous spirit, changed the face of fashion, music and dance.

He died too soon, a victim of his own success and insecurities as much as the drugs that were in his body.

Are too many associated with those in the entertainment business of the what's-in-it-for-me mind set, who would rather let a star die than help with an intervention? Or, are associates in a caught-in-the-middle helpless position where, if you attempt to help, the star would just simply fire anyone who gets in their way and find what they want elsewhere?

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Thursday, September 1, 2011

Cast of 200 Featured in The Old Globe's ODYSSEY



The Old Globe is celebrating its 75th Anniversary with *Odyssey*, which is the culmination of a two-year project with the community, and is a part of the Globe's Southeastern San Diego Residency Project developed by director **Lear deBessonnet** and writer **Todd Almond**.

The new work reimagines Homer's epic poem as seen through the lens of contemporary San Diego. Conceived and directed by deBessonnet with music, lyrics and book by Almond, *Odyssey* will be performed through a unique collaboration between professional artists and members of the community on Friday, Sept. 30 and Saturday, Oct. 1 at 8:00 p.m. and Sunday, Oct. 2 at 7:00 p.m.

Odyssey chronicles the trials and adventures that the ancient Greek hero Odysseus faces on his long journey home from the



war at Troy. Along the way, he encounters a one-eyed giant, confronts the horrifying monsters Scylla and Charybdis, visits the Underworld and resists the intoxicating Circe. Odysseus finally returns home disguised as a beggar and must win back his wife, Penelope, and take revenge on the suitors who have been circling her in his absence.

Professional actors **Alvin Crawford** and **Shelley Thomas** will star as Odysseus and Penelope/Circe, respectively, along with **Todd Almond** as The Singer.

Community Partners on the project include:

St. Stephen's Church Choir as the voice of heaven
 Culture Shock Dance San Diego playing the Phaeacians
 The San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory will score a dream ballet of Odysseus' homecoming
 Valhalla High School Percussion Ensemble will play the Palace Guard
 Children from San Diego Junior Theatre will play the Voices of the Underworld.

The creative team includes Tony and Maria Caligagan (Choreographers), Justin Townsend (Scenic and Lighting Design), Paul Carey (Costume Design), Paul Peterson (Sound Design) and Evangeline Whitlock (Stage Manager).



Over 200 will participate in Odysseus
Photo: Jeffrey Weiser

The nonprofessional cast, comprised of members of the San Diego community, includes Darlene Davies (Eurynome), Kim Duclo (Penelope's First Suitor), Michael Garcia (Prince),

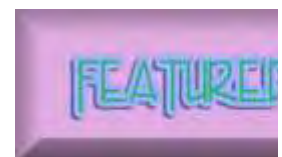


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Dylan Hoffinger (Odysseus' Captain), Martin Martiarena (Dude with Guitar), Lorenzo Martinez (Elpenor), Alex Monge (Telemachus), Davina Van Dusen (Nausicaa), Victoria Matthews, Jordan Scowcroft and Katie Ward (The Calliopes) and dancers from Salsa Inferno (Circe's Ladies) with Jessica Brandon, Dalaysia Cannon, Ashley Dixon, Richard Dobbs, Deja Fields, Renee Gandola, Zyanya Hernandez-Grant, Carson McCalley, Karen Olinga, Al Simmons, Beverly Taylor-Wintence, Lamine Thiam, Hannah Trujillo and Ayerton Zoutendijk (Ithacans/Ensemble); Kenn Burnett, Leland Campbell, Eduard Cao, Andre A. Carter, Sergio Castro, Will Herrera, Dylan Hoffinger, Lorenzo Martinez, Leo Roman, Elliott Sephus and dancers from Salsa Inferno (Odysseus' Men); Karen Bahena, Lina Bien, Katleen Dugas, Melanie Haag, Paola Kubelis and Stephanie Plascencia (Penelope's Women); and Donna Blochwitz, Jane Klofkorn, Yvonne Lindroth Silva and Amara Marsden (Sirens).

[Click Here](#) to purchase tickets online or call (619) 23-GLOBE.

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[Behind the Scene's Profile](#)**Behind the Scene**Did you see "Odyssey" tonight at [The Old Globe](#)? What'd you think?[Like](#) · [Comment](#) · September 30 at 11:31pm**John Keasler** I was at "Mame" at the North Park and really enjoyed it.September 30 at 11:53pm · [1 person](#)**Leigh Anne Nottingham** Thought it was SO well done! Such a feel good, clever take on the Odyssey and the ideas of journeying/home. The community participants, the outdoor theater! The PARTICULARLY talented Todd Almond! So glad I went :)

October 1 at 11:21pm

**Clea Shannon** Incredible! So moving and such a wonderful fusion of experienced talents, young enthusiasm and a glimpse of local San Diego. The energy, emotion and music stick with you. Looking forward to seeing more collaborative works lie this in the future!

Sunday at 2:32pm

**Behind the Scene** Glad to hear what you thought, everyone. I came home Friday night thinking of a few things, too; I wrote 'em up here: <http://vosd.org/pxyfUQ>

Sunday at 6:53pm

**Clea Shannon** Love this!

Sunday at 7:23pm

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Photos by Sam Hodgson

From left to right:

First Row: Chargers players take the field; musician Chris Plaia; one of the Sirens from the Old Globe's production of "Odyssey."

Second Row: Musician Brian Clinebell; birds in the South Bay; an Occupy San Diego march through the streets of downtown San Diego.

Third Row: Har Sin, a deaf refugee from Burma; a farmers market in southeastern San Diego; a church service in southeastern San Diego.

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Mon-Fri 12 p.m. on KPBS Radio

Fall Theater Season Begins

By [Angela Carone](#), [Maureen Cavanaugh](#)

September 15, 2011

The fall theater season in San Diego has begun. Dramas, musicals, and even a site-specific work are all opening across the county.

Guests

Pam Kragen is the arts and features editor at [North County Times](#).

Jim Hebert is the theater critic at the [San Diego Union-Tribune](#).

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[mmcphie](#) | yesterday at 1:12 p.m. — 23 hours, 8 minutes ago

I love the updates on local theater. Thanks, Pam and Jim. I've recently enjoyed plays at The Old Globe, La Jolla Playhouse and more. For a theatrical experience as intimate as a conversation with a friend, check out storytelling events in San Diego.

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The Old Globe THE ODYSSEY

Performance

Date: September 30, 2011 - 8:00pm - October 2, 2011 - 7:00pm**Venue:** The Old Globe

Odyssey is a music theater event commissioned by The Old Globe in celebration of its 75th Anniversary. Director Lear deBessonet and writer Todd Almond's (Girlfriend, We Have Always Lived in the Castle, On the Levee) have reimagined Homer's epic poem as seen through the lens of contemporary San Diego. Odyssey chronicles the trials and adventures that the ancient Greek hero Odysseus faces on his long journey home from the war at Troy. Odysseus finally returns home disguised as a beggar and must win back his wife, Penelope, and take revenge on the suitors who have been circling her in his absence. Odyssey will be performed by both professional artists and over 200 members of the San Diego community as part of the Globe's Southeastern San Diego Residency Project in the outdoor Lowell Davies Festival Theatre.

Venue


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Theater briefing: New shows, new dates

Playhouse extends 'Susurrus,' Mo'olelo announces season, and (even) more

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Videos

Cassie Benavidez and Hannah Rose Kornfeld in "26 Miles," which begins previews this week at Mo'olelo Performing Arts Co. Mo'olelo has just announced its three-show season for 2012. — Crissy Pascual / Infinite Media Works



Written by
**James
Hebert**

7:07 p.m., Sept. 29, 2011

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**Theater briefing: New
shows, new dates**



**Props 'til you drop at
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Summoning
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[Playhouse's 'Susurrus' no
garden-variety drama](#)

[Shedding some light on
'Sunshine'](#)

[A little exposure for
Playhouse's 'Hardbody'
show](#)

[Theater's fast and furious](#)

Catching up on some theater news before another busy weekend of openings (at least over at the Old Globe, which premieres the "West Side Story"-minded work "Somewhere" tonight and the massive Homer musical adaptation "Odyssey" on Friday):

- La Jolla Playhouse has announced it is extending "Susurrus," the Scottish writer David Leddy's [inventive audio play](#) that is experienced via iPod as audience members walk through the San Diego Botanic Garden in Encinitas.

The globally touring piece, [whose local presentation](#) is the first installment in the Playhouse's "Without Walls" series of site-specific works, now continues through Oct. 23. Playgoers will be admitted at 15-minute intervals between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. this Friday through Sunday (Sept. 30 to Oct. 2), and then on the following newly added dates: Oct. 8-9, 14, 16 and 21-23.

Tickets are \$20; go to [lajollaplayhouse.org](#) or call (858) 550-1010.

- Add Playhouse: The theater has confirmed it hosted a private New York reading earlier this month for "Little Miss Sunshine," the movie-adapted musical by James Lapine and William Finn that [had its world premiere](#) in La Jolla last winter.

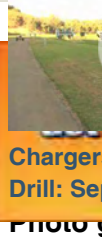
Two La Jolla cast members - Taylor Trench, who played Dwayne, and Georgi James, who played the central character Olive - participated, along with "Sunshine" newcomers Sherie Rene Scott, Raul Esparza, John Cullum and Brooks Ashmanskas.

The theater said in a statement that "the reading was done because there were many new ideas the creative team wanted to try following [the run at the Playhouse](#), and this gave them the opportunity to continue working on the piece, with no particular focus on the future of the project."

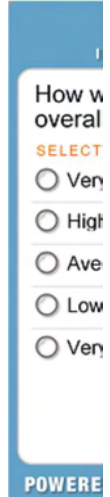
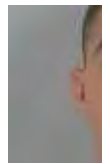
Such readings also can serve to shop the show to investors for a potential Broadway run. But the Playhouse has said there are no plans at the moment for a further "Sunshine" production.

- [Mo'olelo Performing Arts Co.](#) has just announced its 2012 season - and for the first time, the socially engaged company will produce three shows instead of two.

The lineup: Amlin Gray's Obie Award-winning "How I Got That Story" (Feb. 23 to March 18), a black comedy centering on a Vietnam-era war correspondent; "Hoodoo Love" (June 7 to July 1) by Katori Hall (this year's winner of the prestigious Blackburn Prize for female playwrights), about a young woman determined to transcend her past and become a blues singer; and Tanya Saracho's "Kita y Fernanda" (Sept. 27 to Oct. 21, 2012), which follows two Mexican girls from starkly different backgrounds



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Radio: Comprehensive Pension Reform

5

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Posted: Tuesday, October 4, 2011 6:15 pm | Updated: 8:57 pm, Tue Oct 4, 2011.

By [Grant Barrett](#)

[Listen to the latest episode](#) of our [radio show on KOGO AM 600](#), which airs Saturdays at 7:30 a.m.

Scott Lewis and Andrew Donohue discuss the [comprehensive pension reform ballot measure](#) — comprehensive-er pension reform, in fact. They also look, once again, into various pension problems and plans and invoke the specter of [the Dissolving City](#).

Plus, [why Chargers' games are blacked out](#), a [Fact Check of the head of the firefighter's union](#) and the Hero and Goat of the Week (The Old Globe and the Chargers, respectively).

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I'm Grant Barrett, engagement editor for [voiceofsandiego.org](#), in part a new-fangled opinion editor. Got some strong opinions and ideas? Let me help you get them in front of tens of thousands of readers. Drop me a line at grant@voiceofsandiego.org or call me at (619) 550-5666.

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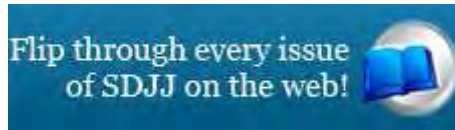
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What's Goin' On – Switching Gears for a Fall Lineup

by Eileen Sondak | [September 2011](#) | [Post your comment »](#)

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By Eileen Sondak

As summer vacations fade into memory, summer-only entertainment winds down, too. Summer Pops plays its final notes Labor Day weekend, and the Old Globe's Shakespeare Festival runs its course Sept. 25. Happily, fall offerings start showing up on local stages this month, including the San Diego Symphony, which bows in with its winter season Sept. 30.

The Old Globe's annual Shakespeare Festival continues to welcome audiences of the alfresco theater scene

most of this month, with a three-show repertory that includes two Shakespeare classics and Peter Shaffer's "Amadeus." "Much Ado About Nothing," a comedy of mismatched lovers, and "The Tempest," the Bard's masterpiece of redemption and forgiveness will rotate with "Amadeus," a powerful drama about Mozart, to round out the Globe's spectacular summer smorgasbord. All three productions are outstanding and not to be missed.

Although sparks are still flying between George Bernard Shaw and socialite Charlotte Payne-Townshend in the bristling new comedy, "Engaging Shaw" (at the Globe's White Theatre through Sept. 4), the Globe is getting ready to unveil two more shows this month. Richard O'Brien's "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" launches the Globe's new season on the Main Stage Sept. 15. This enduring musical phenomenon will continue through Nov. 6.

"Somewhere," a dance-infused world premiere, tells the story of a family of dreamers whose home is headed for demolition. That piece is coming to the Globe's White Theatre Sept. 24-Oct. 30. The outdoor Festival Stage will feature "Odyssey," a new work to celebrate the Globe's 75th anniversary. This large-scale show will be performed Sept. 30-Oct. 2.

San Diego Pops concludes its summer season on a high note Sept. 2-4 with its popular 1812 Tchaikovsky Spectacular. The San Diego Symphony swings into action Sept. 30, with a program titled "Thibaudet Plays Ravel Concertos." The concert, conducted by Jahja Ling, will be repeated Oct. 2. The most exciting event that weekend will take place Oct. 1, when Maestro Ling conducts the Symphony's annual gala, starring Kathleen Battle and Jean-Yves Thibaudet. This stellar evening will include pre- and post-concert activities, as well as the performance.

North Coast Repertory Theatre will open its 30th season with "Lend Me a Tenor," directed by Matthew Wiener, Sept. 7. The multi-award-winning show, a farce with plot twists and double entendres galore, will continue through Oct. 2 at NCR's Solana Beach home, to start things off with hilarity.

Broadway-San Diego will unleash "Blue Man Group" Sept. 20-25. These wildly outrageous entertainers are best known for highly theatrical shows that combine comedy, music and technology to produce totally unique entertainment.

Cygnets Theatre is offering a reimagined version of "Little Shop of Horrors," directed by Sean Murray. The show is like the old black-and-white horror flick on which it's based, and it should develop a strong following before it closes shop Sept. 11.

The La Jolla Playhouse's Potiker Theatre features a production of "Milk Like Sugar" through Sept. 25. The play is about a 16-year-old girl in a pregnancy pact with two high school friends. Savage humor and gritty poetry are hallmarks of this provocative new piece.

The Lamb's Horton Grand Theatre is still jumping with "MixTape," the 1980s musical. That long-running show was extended again through Sept. 4. Then on Sept. 9, "Til We Have Faces" moves in until Sept. 18. The Lamb's Coronado home is showcasing "Trying," a true story about the former head of the Nuremberg Trials and his feisty young assistant. The engrossing show will stay put through Sept. 25, and it sounds like a must-see.

Moonlight's summer season closes after "The Marvelous Wonderettes" completes its run at the Vista-based Amphitheatre. The show is slated to run Sept. 14-Oct. 3.

J*Company will present "Disney's Milan" Sept. 16. The fairytale will entertain audiences of all ages at the JCC in La Jolla through Oct. 2.

— ON STAGE —

Spotlight on community theatre

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Previews by Diana Saenger

Playgoers have lots of tough choices as new and exciting productions ease their way onto San Diego theatrical stages. Here are some of the choices to see, so hurry and make those reservations soon.

Broadway San Diego

Best known for their wildly popular theatrical shows and concerts which combine comedy, music, and technology to produce a totally unique form of entertainment, **BLUE MAN GROUP** is an intensely exciting and wildly outrageous show that leaves the entire audience in a blissful, euphoric state! This unique experience is a form of entertainment like nothing else; guaranteed to be an outing you will never forget. **BLUE MAN GROUP** runs Sept. 20 -25 at the Civic Theatre. For more information call (619) 570-1100. <http://www.broadwaysd.com>

Cygnnet Theater Company

Film Director Roger Corman probably never imagined *Little Shop Of Horrors*, his goofy 1960 B-movie about a man-eating plant being fed blood by a hopeless romantic and shot in two days and one night, would make it more than one week in the theater. After more than fifty years the film, as well as the theatrical play, continues to amuse and beguile its audience. *The Little Shop Of Horrors* rock musical, by composer Alan Menken and writer Howard Ashman, runs through September 11 at Cygnnet Theatre in Old Town. For more information call (619) 337-1525, www.cygnnettheatre.com

La Jolla Playhouse

MILK LIKE SUGAR - Like all teenagers, 16-year-old Annie and her friends crave the hottest designer phones, handbags and fashion. But their prospects for the good life seem limited in the dead-end town they call home. When the girls decide to create their own future by entering into a pregnancy pact, Annie is confronted with the challenge of choosing between the safety of the life she knows and the danger of the life she desires. Winner of the prestigious Edgerton Foundation's New American Plays Award, *Milk Like Sugar* is a coming-of-age story for our times. Kirsten Greenidge's new play is written with warmth, humor and a beautiful, raw honesty about being a teenager today. *Milk Like Sugar* runs August 30 - Sept. 25. **JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR** - This ground-breaking rock opera, which reinvented musical theatre for the modern age, tells the story of the last week of Christ's life. The zeal with which Christ's followers are hailing him as the Son of God becomes a source of dismay to his disciple Judas Iscariot. Fearing that this tide of religious fervor will provoke brutal repression by the occupying Romans, Judas must make his fateful choice between faith and betrayal. *Jesus Christ Superstar* runs Nov. 18 - Dec. 31. For more information call (858) 550-1010, www.lajolaplayhouse.org

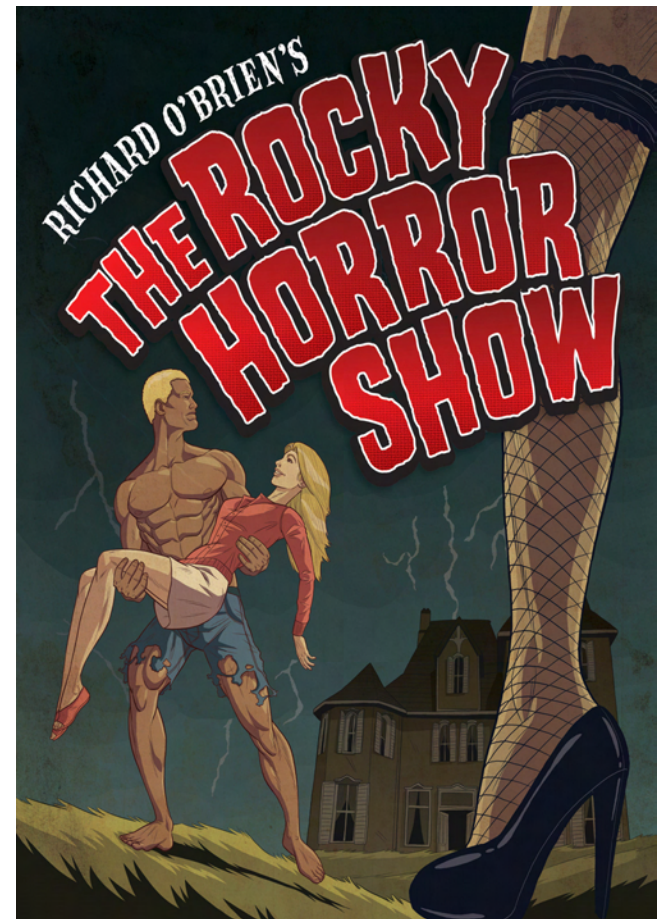
North Coast Repertory

LEND ME A TENOR - Winner of 3 Tony Awards and 4 Drama Desk Awards *Lend Me A Tenor* combines a chain-reaction of mistaken identity, plot twists, double entendres and

the constant slamming of many doors to create one of the funniest farces to grace the American stage in the last 30 years. A sensation on Broadway and in London's West End, *Lend Me A Tenor* pays homage to the madcap screwball comedies of the 1930's, guaranteed to leave audiences howling hysterically with laughter and walking out the door with a warm smile. *Lend Me A Tenor* runs Sept. 2 - Oct. 7. For more information call (858) 481-1055, <http://www.northcoastrep.org>

Old Globe Theatre

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW - The musical that became a movie and started a 35-year nonstop cultural phenomenon is back where it is meant to be seen—live on stage! A sexy, wild, funny, tongue-in-cheek interactive time warp through a kaleidoscope of camp with a musical score that has become iconic—one showstopper after another! Strange things happen when Brad and Janet, a clean-cut young couple from the suburbs, get caught with a flat in the middle of nowhere. After an incredible night at the Frankenstein place they learn a little bit about themselves and the world. *For Mature Audiences. The Rocky Horror Show* runs Sept. 15 - Nov. 6 in The Old Globe Theatre. **SOMEWHERE** - A World Premiere play from Old Globe Playwright-in-Residence Matthew Lopez, whose *The Whipping Man* was a smash hit at the Globe and then New York. Lopez's poignant new play is about one family's attempt to make its fantasy a reality. Gorgeous dance sequences are woven throughout the play



The Rocky Horror Show. Credit: courtesy

and help to tell the story of Inez Candelaria and her three children's dream of a life in show business. With their building scheduled for demolition and their life together beginning to crumble, the filming of the movie of *West Side Story* on the streets of their soon to be abandoned neighborhood finally brings reality into focus. *Some-where* runs Sept. 24 - Oct 30 in the Shirley and Harvey White Theater. **ODYSSEY** -

Director Lear deBessonet and writer/composer Todd Almond have developed an epic music theatre event, *Odyssey*, in celebration of The Old Globe's 75th anniversary. DeBessonet and Almond update the classic story of Odysseus, the Greek hero who faced giants, monsters and seductive sirens in his journey home from the Trojan War. Here, Odysseus' adventures are translated into a voyage through the people and places of modern-day San Diego. *Odyssey* will feature a cast of 200 performers coming together in a unique collaboration between professional artists and community partners. *Odyssey* runs Sept. 30 - Oct. 2 in the Lowell Davis Theatre. For more information: (619) 23-GLOBE, www.TheOldGlobe.org

San Diego Repertory Theatre

WALTER CRONKITE IS DEAD - This West Coast premiere of an intimate comedy takes the vitriolic rhetoric of red state vs. blue state and asks us to view "the other" with our eyes wide open. A fierce thunderstorm shut down airports, two women get stuck in a waiting area at Reagan National Airport...and the drama goes on and on. Walter Cronkite is Dead runs Sep. 17 - Oct. 16 in the Lyceum Space. For more information call (619) 544-1000 or visit www.screp.org

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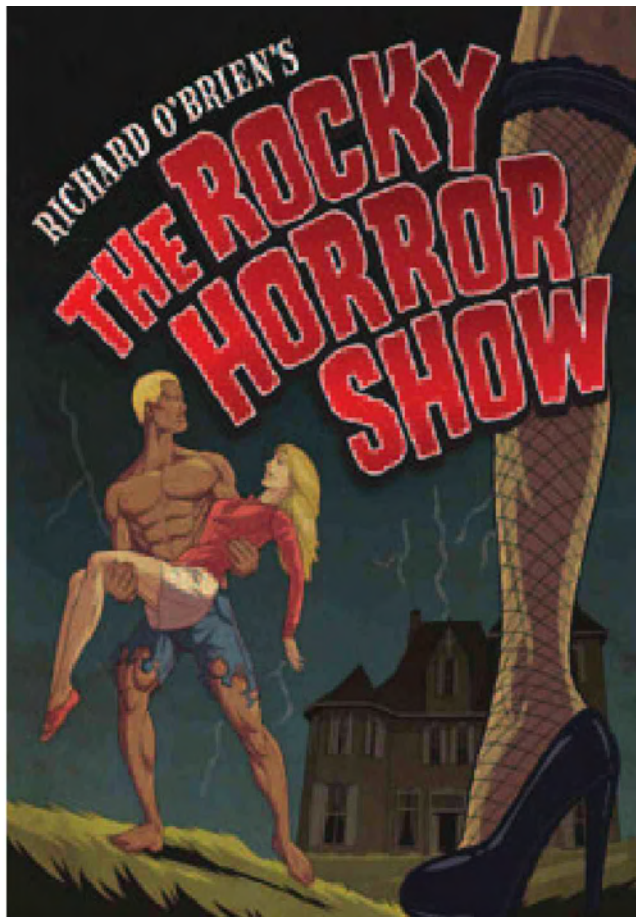
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Old Globe Theatre

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

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For Mature Audiences. *The Rocky Horror Show* runs Sept. 15 – Nov. 6 in The Old Globe Theatre. **SOMEWHERE** - A World Premiere play from Old Globe Playwright-in-Residence Matthew Lopez, whose *The Whipping Man* was a smash hit at the Globe and then New York. Lopez's poignant new play is about one family's attempt to make its fantasy a reality. Gorgeous dance sequences are woven throughout the play



The Rocky Horror Show. Credit: courtesy

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THEATER



“ODYSSEY”

Opens Friday in Balboa Park

The Old Globe celebrates its 75th anniversary with the world premiere of Todd Almond and Lear deBessonet's musical theater event that reimagines Homer's epic poem as seen through the lens of contemporary San Diego, featuring a cast of more than 200 local residents, choir members, musicians and actors; 8 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Oct. 2; Lowell Davies Festival Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, San Diego; 619-234-5623.

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Get Going with VIDEOS: Fall in San Diego may actually be better than summer!

ESTHER RUBIO-SHEFFREY - SDGLN STAFF WRITER
September 28th, 2011

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Summer may be over, but that is no reason to stay indoors. San Diego has so many things to offer this week that it's possible you will not go home at all!

ON STAGE

The Old Globe Theatre will celebrate its 75th anniversary over three days beginning **Friday, Sept. 30**. Director Lear deBessonet updates the classic story of [Odyssey](#), the Greek hero who faced giants, monsters and seductive sirens in his journey home from the Trojan War, into a voyage through the people and places of modern-day San Diego. *Cost: All seats \$15.*

Through **Oct. 30**, **The Old Globe** will also feature the world premiere of [Somewhere](#), a play about one family's attempt to make its show business fantasy a reality. *Cost: \$29 - \$64.*

Several productions will be ending soon, and if you haven't seen them, they are highly recommended. Through **Oct. 8** the **OnStage Playhouse** will feature the Jane Austen adaptation of [Pride And Prejudice](#). *Cost: \$14 - \$16.*

At **Diversions Theatre**, through **Saturday, Oct. 2**, see the "splendid" and epic struggle between power and nobility as portrayed in [Edward II](#), the classic tale of England's king who forsakes everything for his passions and pays a tragic price at the hands of his conniving noblemen and Queen. *Cost: \$31 - \$33.*

The **North Coast Rep** has extended its presentation of the award winning [Lend Me A Tenor](#), through **Oct. 9**. The hilarious farce is a combination of mistaken identity, plot twists, double entendres, and the constant slamming of many doors. *Cost: \$34 - \$39.*

MAKE IT A MOVIE NIGHT

Cinema Under the Stars in Mission Hills invites you to get your freak on, with the 70's cult classic [Harold and Maude](#). Watch the fascinating friendship of a rich young man and his fearless older woman, all set to a memorable Cat Stevens soundtrack, **Sept. 29** through **Oct. 1** at 8 pm. *Cost: \$14 - \$15.*

It's your last chance (until next summer) to catch poolside screening at **The Pearl Hotel** with another 80's classic - [The Goonies](#)! *Cost: Free; food and alcoholic drinks available for purchase.*

The **San Diego Public Library** in Mission Valley will screen HBO's **You Don't Know Jack** on **Saturday, Oct. 1** at 11:15 am

[ENLARGE](#)

Photo credit: Ken Jacques

Cast of Diversions Theatre's "Edward II"

"MiXtape" ---- Lamb's Players Theatre has extended its production of this new revue by Jon Lorenz and Colleen Kollar Smith, offering a fun and fast-paced musical journey through the music of the 1980s; 7:30 p.m. Thursdays; 8 p.m. Fridays; 4 and 8 p.m. Saturdays; 2 p.m. Sundays; extended through Nov. 6; Lamb's Players at the Horton Grand Theatre, 444 Fourth Ave., San Diego; \$29-\$58; 619-437-0600 or lambplayers.org.

"Mulan" ---- J*Company youth theater presents Disney's comedy musical about a female warrior in ancient China with a cast of 83 local youth; 8 p.m. Oct. 1; 1 and 4:30 p.m. Oct. 2; Garfield Theatre, Jacobs Family Campus, 4126 Executive Drive, La Jolla; \$14-\$16; sdcjc.org/jcompany or 858-362-1348.

National Acrobats of China ---- The touring troupe performs martial arts, illusion, tumbling, juggling, acrobatics and feats of strength; 8 p.m. Oct. 1; Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 615 Town Center Drive, Costa Mesa; tickets start at \$15; scfta.org or 714-556-2787.

"Night Stage to Big Shaft" ---- Peggy Sue Productions presents Grant Gelvin's comedy murder-mystery-comedy dinner theater production about a murder spree that occurs at a stage stop in the California mining town of Big Shaft, circa 1853; 7:30 p.m. Sept. 30 and Oct. 1; Mikki's Restaurant, 1639 E. Valley Parkway, Escondido; \$35 (includes three-course dinner and show); reservations required to 760-489-2496 or www.peggysueanddinnertoo.com.

"Odyssey" ---- The Old Globe presents the world premiere of Todd Almond and Lear deBessonet's musical theater event that reimagines Homer's epic poem as seen through the lens of contemporary San Diego, with a cast of more than 200; 8 p.m. Sept. 30 and Oct. 1; 7 p.m. Oct. 2; Lowell Davies Festival Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, San Diego; \$15; 619-234-5623.

"Of Mice and Men" ---- New Village Arts Theatre presents John Steinbeck's drama about two migrant workers in 1930s California scratching out a living and dreaming of a better life; previews, Oct. 26-28; opens Oct. 29 and runs through Nov. 20; showtimes, 8 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays; 3 and 8 p.m. Saturdays; 2 p.m. Sundays; New Village Arts, 2787 State St., Carlsbad; \$26-\$36; newvillagearts.org or 760-433-3245.

"Passage to Proxima" ---- Radio sound-effects expert Scott Paulson and writer Gary Robbins present the premiere of their live sci-fi radio drama, set in 1930 San Diego and featuring live actors, live music and lively sound effects; 7 p.m. Oct. 30; Seuss Room, Geisel Library, UC San Diego, La Jolla; free; scottsounds.com or 858-822-5758.

"Pride and Prejudice" ---- South Coast Repertory presents Joseph Hanreddy and J.R. Sullivan's stage adaptation of Jane Austen's epic class-crossing romance between a stubborn middle-class woman and a haughty upper-class man; 7:30 p.m. Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays; 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 2:30 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays; through Oct. 9; Segerstrom Stage, South Coast Repertory, 655 Town Center Drive, Costa Mesa; \$20-\$66; scr.org or 714-708-5555.

"The Rainmaker" ---- PowPAC, Poway's Community Theatre presents N. Richard Nash's romantic



production, smartly directed by James Vasquez, is too likable to dismiss. Then there's the audience around you: You might have a cross-dresser seated in your row, or maybe just a fan bearing a glow stick who knows how to dance "The Time Warp."

The show runs through Nov. 6 at the Old Globe Theatre. \$29 and up.

Two women—one a liberal sophisticate, the other a conservative fanny-packer—waiting 90 minutes in an airport lounge for a plane and striking up a conversation is all that happens in San Diego Rep's *Walter Cronkite is Dead*. Well, it's almost all that

happens. That the very strained conversation becomes if not a friendship then at least a realization of mutual respect is the result of solid performances by Ellen Crawford and Melinda Gilb. What might have been static dramedy thankfully is not.

It runs through Oct. 16 at the Lyceum Theatre, Downtown. \$37 and up. sdrep.org

Write to davidc@sdcitybeat.com and editor@sdcitybeat.com.

Opening

Odyssey: Homer's epic poem is given a contemporary, and local, treatment in a production done in collaboration with the Old Globe Theatre's Southeastern San Diego Residency Project. Opens Sept. 30 at the Lowell Davies Festival Theatre in Balboa Park. \$15. oldglobe.org

Trailer Park Queen: A one-woman show by storyteller and spoken-word artist Teresa Gunn, Oct. 1 only at San Diego City College's Saville Theatre, Downtown. Donations asked. musiciansforeducation.org

Now Playing

The Marvelous Wonderettes: Tunes from the '50s and '60s power this musical surrounding the Springfield High School prom. Through Oct. 1 at the Moonlight Amphitheatre in Vista. \$22

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By Eileen Sondak

The sound of music will ring out in Symphony Hall this month, joining a full slate of theatrical offerings coming our way in October.

The Old Globe's production of Richard O'Brien's "Rocky Horror Show" launched the season on the Main Stage recently. This enduring musical phenomenon will continue to add to its cult following through Nov. 6.

"Somewhere," a world premiere, infused with dance, tells the story of a family of dreamers whose home is headed for demolition. The show has made its home in the Globe's White Theatre, where it will remain through Oct. 30. The outdoor Festival Stage will wind down its brief staging of "Odyssey," a new work to celebrate the Globe's 75th anniversary, Oct. 2.

The San Diego Symphony kicked off its winter season Sept. 30 with a program titled "Thibaudet Plays Ravel Concertos." That concert, conducted by Jahja Ling, will be repeated Oct. 2. The most exciting event on this opening weekend will take