

Best theatrical exploration of ethnicity

Professional theater: *The Clean House* at B Street Theatre

Community theater: *Let the Eagle Fly* at California Stage

The B Street Theatre doesn't often do ethnic shows for grown-ups. But playwright Sarah Ruhl's *The Clean House* posed a thoughtful, cutting contrast between career-driven, logical, uptight white Americans (B Street regulars Jamie Jones and Amy Resnick) and laid back, intuitive, sensual Brazilians (visiting actress Maricela Ochoa). Director Nancy Carlin incorporated magical flights of fancy in this curiously absorbing, unconventionally told story. We'd enjoy seeing more shows along this line. 2711 B Street, (916) 443-5300, www.bstreettheatre.org. California Stage, Ray Tatar's artsy little venue by the Light Rail tracks, pulled off something unusual last fall: an original musical based on the life of farm labor legend César Chávez, featuring a cast of community actors and musicians. The show turned out to be highly watchable, and several songs were toe-tappers. Actor/director Richard Falcon has the Chávez family's permission to stage *Let the Eagle Fly* again, sometime in the coming year—this time with more professionals involved. 1723 25th Street, (916) 451-5822, www.calstage.org. J.H.

Best way to strengthen your cultural awareness and your arms

Drum lessons with Sacramento Taiko Dan

With the exception of under-rock-dwellers, everyone in Sacramento has seen Sacramento Taiko Dan—or at least heard their rhythmic rumblings. Whether it's a half-time show at a Monarchs or Kings game, a school performance for the munchkins, a performance at the Pacific Rim Festival or an appearance at a Women's History Month event by all-female Taiko troupe Jodaiko, Sacramento Taiko Dan is a local favorite. But in addition to the majesty of a Taiko performance, learning to play the drums is one heckuva workout. Sacramento Taiko Dan offers a variety of one-time workshops and ongoing classes at their Dojo. Whether you hope to become an artisan of the drumming world or simply work up a sweat while making a respectful, traditional and mighty big noise, check out some of these classes in traditional Japanese Taiko drumming. *Sacramento Taiko Dan Dojo*, 2121 Blumenfeld Drive; (916) 444-5667; www.sactaiko.org. K.M.

Web Extras

Best theatrical comeback

Professional theater: Frank Condon, Director of *Urinetown* at River Stage

Community theater: Kelton Howard, actor in *Yellowman* at Celebration Arts

Director Frank Condon, who's presented many compelling shows on racial/social themes at River Stage, took a long break after wife Kim's death in 2005. But Condon made a decisive return this year with an outstanding production of the sassy, subversive musical comedy *Urinetown*. Set in a desperately water-short future, the show features a shamelessly corrupt corporate kingpin, who's overthrown by that most unfashionable of ethnic groups: the poor. But *Urinetown* offers no easy solutions—things just get worse after the revolution.

Actor Kelton Howard came up years ago through the Black theater program at CSU Sacramento. Howard left town for several years, but he made a memorable return in the Celebration Arts production of *Yellowman*, a gritty story about prejudice within the Black community against African Americans whose skin tone is kinda light. J.H.

Best unusual theater performance

Professional theater: Karyn Casl, actress in *The Story of Opal* at Foothill Theatre

Community theater: Christin O'Cuddehy, actress in *Fat Pig* at Capital Stage

Versatile actress Karyn Casl, a mainstay at Foothill Theatre, gave an amazing performance as a French-American nature girl living in the Oregon woods. *The Story of Opal* was a play about moods and textures (rather than story). Speaking in idiosyncratic, fractured syntax tied to physical movement, Casl created an impressionistic stream-of-consciousness. **You could feel the dappled sunlight and hear the wind.** We've never seen a performance quite like it. Casl will be back in new shows by Foothill this season.

Sacramento's Capital Stage went against the trend toward light summer fare with *Fat Pig*, a cautionary tale about a difficult, ultimately doomed romance between a 165-pound man and a much heavier woman. Actress Christin O'Cuddehy (who's the right size for her part) was at the center of the show, and we admired her frank, engaging performance in a role that many actresses would prefer to avoid. J.H.



SACRAMENTO TAIKO DAN. Drum lessons from Taiko Dan are so much more than an arm workout. They'll have you sweating all the way through. But making music is more exciting than losing pounds and precious minutes of your life on a treadmill, anyway. SN&R PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES

Best local multicultural festivals

Croatian Extravaganza

For the last 25 years, the Croatian-American Cultural Center has sponsored a festival in June that includes Croatian food and cultural programs. www.caacc.com.

Festival de la Familia

Held the last Sunday in April, this festival celebrates family in the customs and traditions of Latino/a cultures around the world. www.festivaldelafamilia.org.

Filipino Fiesta

Sacramento celebrates its Filipino residents on the first Sunday in June at the Filipino Fiesta with food and cultural activities. Contact Paul Kekai Manansala; p.manansala@shcglobal.net.

Greek Festival

Sponsored by Sacramento's Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, this festival is held on Labor Day weekend and best known for its incredible food. www.annunciation.ca.socrch.org/festival/index.php.

Juneteenth: A Celebration of Freedom

This festival celebrates a date near June 19, 1865, when word of the end of the civil war and news of freedom from slavery reached African Americans in Texas. www.discoversold.org/juneteenth/.

Oktoberfest

Long before every corner brewpub started advertising an Oktoberfest, Sacramento Turn Verein was hosting the traditional German autumn festival in their lovely hall. With beer, food, music, and dancing—everything except the traditional horse race—this is one cultural festival that you don't want to pass up. This year's fun is set for October 5 and 6. www.sacramentoturnverein.com.



Pacific Rim Street Fest

Sponsored by the Asian Pacific Rim Foundation, this street festival in Old Sacramento kicks off the summer with a mid-May celebration of the cultures border the Pacific Ocean. www.pacificrimstreetfest.com.

Rainbow Festival

This is the end-of-summer blowout for Sacramento's GLBTQ community, held every Labor Day weekend in the "Lavendar Heights" Midtown neighborhood. www.rainbowfestival.com.

St. Patrick's Day (Lá Fhéile Pádraig)

The annual St. Patrick's Day parade and party in Old Sacramento is one of several annual events that Sacramento's Shamrock Club



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