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The Art of Tomorrow

Portland's TBA fest offers
NW arts lovers a glimpse
of the future.



STREB

Ten years ago, Kristy Edmunds had a vision: that Oregon could support a cutting edge art performance scene. The odds were against her. Edmunds, a native Northwesterner and visual artist who'd established a strong performance arts series with the Portland Art Museum, had left that job after differences with the museum leaders. Several other attempts to create such institutions had recently foundered, in part because arts funding in Oregon — already among the nation's lowest — was drying up.

A decade later, Edmunds' vision is still going strong. PICA, the Portland Institute for Contemporary Arts, is one of the nation's most visionary community arts organizations. With a \$1.6 million budget, PICA has a history of bringing some of the world's most out-there artists to Portland, from Philip Glass, John Zorn and Bill Frisell to the late Spalding Gray, David Sedaris, Miranda July, Diamanda Galas and Karen Finley as well as dozens of less widely known (so far) explorers of art's frontiers.

Now, Edmunds is leaving PICA to settle full-time in Melbourne, Australia, where for the past five years she has also directed a similarly renowned arts festival and where her life partner has recently given birth to the couple's first child. Edmund is leaving in a final burst of glory: PICA's third annual Time-Based Arts (TBA) festival, which carpet-bombs the city with performances by local, regional and international dancers, musicians, filmmakers, and multimedia artists. From Sept. 9-18, Eugeneans can drive a couple hours north and find themselves immersed in the future of art.

With several world or U.S. premieres, TBA is rapidly becoming to avant garde performance what Austin's SXSW is to indie rock. This year's model is certainly one of the most exciting arts festivals on the West Coast, maybe in the world. Besides bringing path-breaking art from around the world, TBA also helps jumpstart the Northwest arts scene by featuring more than 80 local and regional artists and by connecting up-and-coming Northwest artists with national artists and curators, with audiences and with each other.

TBA, Edmunds wrote in an email from Melbourne, "is an important opportunity for artists who have developed an authentic vision for where they are headed, and have a demonstrated track record and a commitment to pursuing ideas that are artistically consequential to their form, but not necessarily geared for a 'commercial' or 'creative' market." Here's a brief overview of some of the main staged performances Sept. 9-18.

• Sound & Vision. One sign of TBA's success is the difficulty of defining exactly what

pigeonhole fits many of the performances. Some of the most intriguing musicians combine music with video: DJ Spooky's "remix" of the classic (and racist) film *Birth of a Nation*; Daniel Bernard Roumain's marriage of violin and video portraiture in *Vision Blinding*; aphids' *Skin Quartet*.

• Music & Dance. The new music string quartet Ethel returns to TBA with original music by hot composer Phil Kline (who set Zippo and Rumsfeld "poetry" to engaging scores) and dance by Wally Cardona. *Locust's Convenience* is a new work presented by Seattle choreographer and videographer Amy O'Neal and composer Zeke Keeble.

• Bodies in Motion. If it's high-flying post-modern dance aerialists you want, then look no further than STREB at 8 pm on 9/8 in Pioneer Courthouse Square. This free concert features Elizabeth Streb's NY-based company that defies gravity and the boundaries of self-punishment as they hurl themselves through space and crash onto a variety of surfaces.

Eugene's own Tiffany Mills and her company present *Elegy and Godard*. Mills earned her BA in dance from the UO and now makes good use of it in NYC. With music by John Zorn and film accompaniment by Ela Troyano, based on works by Jean Genet and the films of Jean-Luc Godard, it's clear this former Duck ain't sippin' lattes at Allamn Bros. anymore.

From the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Faustin Linyekula/Les Studios Kabako weaves a dance-theater dream in *Triptique Sans Titre*. Scraping through the political and economic realities of war-torn colonialism and oppression, Linyekula offers a provocative story of collective amnesia.

Need a little Butoh in your life? Kota Yamazaki/Fluid Hug Hug will wither their way to existential bliss in *Rise: Rose*. Blending Japanese Butoh, modern dance and hip-hop, Yamazaki explores the human form that's at once powerful and meek.

Then fling like a Streb dancer back to Carl Hancock Rux's *Mycenaeon*, tethering together movement, opera, video and a little Greek tragedy for good measure. Rux delves into the rise and fall of civilizations, the pulse of the new and the crumbling of the old, and throughout, the push to survive.

Besides the 16 stage works, TBA also includes a slew of chats, workshops and lectures, which offer glimpses into the making of avant-garde art. There are 16 more performances at Works, an industrial warehouse transformed into a late-night dancing/dining/drinking hangout. Works features DJs, video, avant-food, with NW musicians and other performers from Tokyo to Mexico.

EW

For more on TBA, log on to www.pica.org

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