

Bay Area arts: 9 great shows and concerts to catch this weekend



Jason Niedle/La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts

From left, Krystina Alabado, Kyra Kennedy and Gianna Yanelli star in the new musical "Mystic Pizza" for Center Repertory Company.



By **RANDY MCMULLEN** | rmcmullen@bayareanewsgroup.com | Bay Area News Group

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From a new musical based on a classic '80s movie to a tribute to Paul Robeson in Oakland and San Jose Jazz's Winter Fest concert series, there is a lot to see and do in the Bay Area this week. Here's a partial roundup.



When “Mystic Pizza” premiered in 1988, it might not have seemed like it would have much of a legacy. But with a stellar young cast — Julia Roberts, Annabeth Gish, Lili Taylor, Vincent D’Onofrio and Matt Damon in his very first film — the enjoyable romantic comedy/drama following three Portuguese American teens working at a pizza joint in Connecticut managed to stake a claim in the American pop culture subconscious.

And, of course, any movie that sticks around long enough eventually gets turned into a stage musical (and vice-versa). Adapted by Sandy Rustin and Carmel Dean, “Mystic Pizza” the musical debuted in 2021 and features killer ‘80s and ‘90s hits from the likes of Melissa Etheridge, Cyndi Lauper, Pat Benatar, Melissa Etheridge, Wilson Phillips, The Bangles and Huey Lewis and the News.

Now the musical is coming to the East Bay. Directed by Casey Hushio and choreographed by Connor Gallagher, “Mystic Pizza” is being presented by the Center Repertory Company in a production that opens on Friday.

Details: Through Feb. 25; Leshner Center for the Arts, Walnut Creek; \$38-\$78; www.lesherartscenter.org.

— *Randy McMullen, Staff*

Hot winter jazz in San Jose

San Jose Jazz is best known for its awesome Summer Fest, which turns downtown San Jose into a bustling buffet of jazz, blues, Latin and other performances every August. But the organization also presents a cool Winter Fest/New Works series of concerts beginning this week.

On Feb. 16, Colombian-born singer Diana Trujillo, who performed with the Bay Area band La Misa Negra for years until reinventing herself in 2020 as the solo act Chika Di. She’s known for her high-voltage blend of Latin, electronic, afro and pop sounds as well as her powerful vocals. On Saturday, San Jose pianist and composer Dahveed Behroozi takes the stage. He’s been a mainstay in the Bay Area music scene for some time as a band leader and supporting musician acclaimed for his talent and versatility. He is comfortable tackling jazz, classical, new music, pop and ambient sounds.

Upcoming performers include guitarist Hristo Virtchev (Feb. 23), keyboardist Sundra Manning (Feb. 24), and the incomparable bassist, composer and activist Marcus Sheldy (March 1) among others.

Details: Series runs through March 9 at San Jose Jazz Break Room, 310 S. 1st St., San Jose; tickets to most concerts are \$10; sanjosejazz.org.

— *Bay City News Foundation*

Classical picks; Paul Robeson tribute, Schwabacher Recital

Here are three upcoming events that classical music lovers won’t want to miss.

Honoring Robeson: This week’s Oakland Symphony program pays tribute to the American activist, athlete, and author Paul Robeson. “Here I Stand: Paul Robeson,” by composer Carlos Simon and librettist Dan Harder, makes its world premiere in a performance conducted by Kedrick Armstrong and featuring the mighty bass Morris Robinson and the Oakland Symphony Chorus. The program also includes “Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman No. 6” by Joan Tower, and the Symphony No. 5 by Shostakovich.

Details: 8 p.m. Feb. 16; Paramount Theatre, Oakland; \$19.60-\$90; oaklandsymphony.org.

Singing at Schwabacher: Presented by the Merola Opera Program and San Francisco Opera Center, this year’s Schwabacher Recital series marks its 40th anniversary with three events featuring artists from around the world. First up is Italian-Canadian mezzo-soprano Simona Genga, accompanied by pianist Hyemin Jeong (Wednesday). A March 6 program features sopranos Arianna Rodriguez and Olivia Smith, mezzo-soprano Nikola Printz, bass-baritone Han and pianist Yang Lin. On April 3, Samantha Hankey sings a program accompanied by Merola’s artistic director Carrie-Ann Matheson.

Details: Wednesday through April 3; Atrium Theatre, San Francisco; \$30 individual tickets, \$75 series; sfopera.com.

Details: 3 p.m. Sunday; Hertz Hall, UC Berkeley; \$67-\$72; calperformances.org.

— *Georgia Rowe, Correspondent*

All hail the queen

Amy Grant has had nothing short of a blockbuster career.

The acclaimed singer-songwriter-musician — who is often referred to as “The Queen of Christian Pop” — has sold more than 30 million albums since getting her start in the music business in the mid-1970s. She’s also won a half-dozen Grammys, earned Kennedy Center Honors recognition and taken home enough Gospel Music Association Dove Awards to fill multiple shelves.

She was one of the first Christian contemporary music (CCM) artists to really cross over on the charts and gain widespread mainstream pop recognition. Notably, the lovely 1986 duet that she did with Peter Cetera — “The Next Time I Fall” — earned Grant her first No. 1 on the pop charts.

Her album “Heart in Motion” which spent 32 weeks atop the Christian album charts, sold 5 million copies in the U.S. alone and delivered Grant’s second No. 1 pop single, “Baby Baby.” Since that landmark commercial triumph, Grant has gone on to release such acclaimed and successful albums as 1994’s “House of Love,” 1997’s “Behind the Eyes,” 2002’s “Legacy... Hymns and Faith” and 2013’s “How Mercy Looks from Here.”

Now she’s on the road and has two big shows in the greater Bay Area.

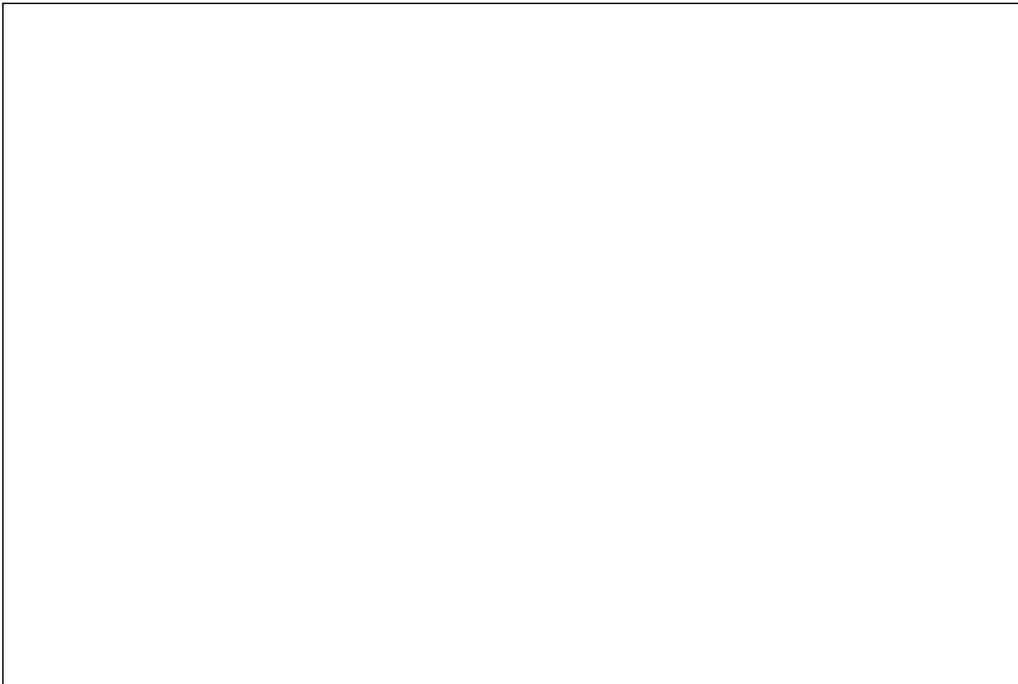
Details: 8 p.m. Feb. 20 at Uptown Theatre in Napa; tickets start at \$60; uptowntheatrenapa.com; 7:30 p.m. Feb. 21 at Fox Theatre, Redwood City; tickets start at \$65; foxrwc.com.

— *Jim Harrington, Staff*

Free fun in SF

While the Bay Area’s free concert scene usually operates in high gear during the spring, summer and fall, music lovers don’t have to wait that long to catch some no-cost shows. This week, the Civic Center Soundtrack free concert series launches at Fulton Plaza, between San Francisco Main Library and the Asian Art Museum. The series, part of a larger drive by the city to pump up public art and entertainment offerings at Fulton, Civic Center and UN plazas, is slated to offer free shows from noon to 3 p.m. Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays through August. We’re talking some 75 concerts featuring a wide variety of performers and styles. On Feb. 15, the series welcomes Bay Area underground band Bite, which, serves up “fast, loud, sexy, trashy down and dirty punk and roll” (you can also catch the band at Bottom of the Hill club on Feb. 23); piano-and-beat instrumentalist John Shearer; and singer-songwriter-guitarist JW Blunt, whose lively tune “Time Traveling Tamale Lady” can be heard along with other tracks on his YouTube channel.

On Feb. 16, you can catch Manos Lindas, a three-piece genre-blending “cultural melting pot” outfit; XtinaM, a goth-tinged power-ballad singer; and electronic musician Young Sun, who blends field recording and acoustic instruments in his sound. The series is put on by Illuminate/City of Awe. Upcoming attractions coming to the area include cornhole boards and Foosballs tables as well as a LED installation at UN Plaza. And the city Recreation and Parks Department is hosting a free Bay Area Skate Fest at the UN Plaza from 1-3 p.m. Sunday (go to sfrecpark.org/calendar for details).





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Details: For more information on the concert series, go to illuminate.org/events.

The Civic Center is not the only district in San Francisco looking to spruce up its entertainment value. It's no secret that COVID, the fentanyl epidemic and shifting economic patterns have taken a toll on the city's downtown. Downtown SF, a private/public partnership aiming to revitalize the Financial District and the city's downtown core, has helped sponsor such things as more lighting and public art work, more outdoor dining and outdoor events ranging from gatherings to yoga and fitness classes. There's also a new entertainment zone called Landing at Leidesdorff, on Leidesdorff Street, near Washington and Battery Streets. On Thursday, the site is hosting its second Theatre! On Thursday free outdoor movie show with a 6 p.m. screening of Ryan Coogler's blockbuster superhero film "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever," (the sequel to his "Black Panther" film). Free popcorn, hot chocolate and coffee will be available. Note that the event is free but with limited seating. Reserving a seat at downtownsf.org is a good idea. If you happen to be in the Leidesdorff Street area around lunchtime on Thursday, you can catch a free show from noon to 2 p.m. by Mikiya Matsudar, a steel guitarist who specializes in Swing-era Hawaiian music. Other free concerts, comedy shows and film screenings are planned for the future. You can find more information on the entertainment offerings and the group behind them at downtownsf.org.

— Bay City News Foundation

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