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ARTS DEVO

by **JASON CASSIDY** • jasonc@newsreview.com



“SAIL ON!” Some weeks, when **Arts DEVO** sits down to write this column, it feels like a journey into uncharted rough waters at night; the cold winds of an approaching deadline chilling my bones as I try to stay afloat and not throw up. Nearly 700 columns in, such blind hope has yet to be dashed, and in fact it’s often surprisingly rewarded with an apropos thread to hook onto. This week, it was a poem I stumbled upon—**“Columbus,”** by **Joaquin Miller**—that sparked inspiration. An excerpt:

*Before him not the ghost of
shores./Before him only shoreless
seas./The good mate said: “Now
must we pray./For lo! the very stars
are gone./Brave Adm’r’l, speak; what
shall I say?”/“Why, say: ‘Sail on! sail
on! and on!’”*

What’s any of this have to do with anything? If we backtrack my steps: “Sail on!” is a line from “Columbus”; it’s also the motto for the **California Writers Society** (founded in 1909 with Miller as well as **Jack London**, **George Sterling** and **John Muir** as founding members); the California Writers Society is the parent organization for the **North State Writers** branch; North State Writers is putting on **Live Word II** this weekend (Jan. 31-Feb. 1) at the **Blue Room Theatre**; I am an arts columnist who writes about local events like Live Word II. “Land ho!”

Live Word II is a collaboration between the Blue Room and the North State Writers that’s described as a “no costumes, no props” reading by actors of a dozen original written works. Here’s a bit from the show’s intro (sent to me by branch Vice President **Brian Marshall**):

Exposure to these specific words or words in general may result in the following side-effects: headache, nausea, bloating, inability to sleep, inability to not sleep, loose stools, tight curves, periods of crushing self-doubt and existential dread, a realization that Donald Trump might not always be telling the truth, and an inexplicable compulsion to do the Hokey Pokey.

And, lastly, let it be noted that “word” is a four-letter word.

Side note: Do yourself a favor and search the interwebs for the history of Miller; the dude had a crazy life. Born Cincinnatus Heine Miller in 1837, he was a lawyer, horse thief, Pony Express rider, newspaperman, mining-camp cook, world traveler, poet and more. He fomented Indian rebellion in Shasta County, literally bit the ankles of aristocrats in England, and ended up spending his last 26 years dressing in Wild West costumes and living on a compound in the Oakland hills while earning the distinction of **“Poet of the Sierras.”**

T IS IN THE HOUSE Last month, CN&R Calendar Editor and all around badass **Neesa Sonique** retired from her post at the paper to focus on grad school. I already miss her stories and insightful, creative thoughts on every subject, but I’m consoled by the fact that she’ll be stopping by the film pages of the paper with reviews from time to time.

And, good news: As of last week, we have a new calendar editor, **Trevor Whitney**. Many of you may know him from his work holding down the bottom end as bassist for local experimental/hip-hop crew **Perverf**, and before that as one-time A&E editor for Chico State’s **Orion** newspaper. Send him your arts and music events and welcome him to the party: cnrcalendar@newsreview.com.



Poet of the Sierras

