

Ad-libber

Tim Mahoney of Good Luck Macbeth Theatre Company, 124 W. Taylor St., will direct *Unscripted*, a new series of improv plays. The plays don't start until April 10, but auditions are being held Nov. 30 and Dec. 7 starting at 10 a.m. Everyone is welcome, regardless of experience level. You must attend both auditions.

So, what's your interest in improv?

It kind of encompasses, like, all of the things in my life. It makes me who I am. I've been doing improv for ... seven or eight years, at this point—teaching it, performing. ... It's the thing in my life that I have stuck with the longest. That might not be the most ringing endorsement of it, but—as a person who tends to gravitate toward the shiny object in the room pretty quickly—improv has been that constant shiny object for me. It's a thing that I love. I've been doing it four days a week for the last seven years, pretty much. It takes up a lot of my time, but it's what I always have more time for.

Is improv easier for actors with experience in scripted plays or for newbies?

I think it depends on where you're coming from. ... I think it depends, really, on the person. For some people, improv is a really natural and freeing thing to



PHOTO/JERI DAVIS

go into. For some people, it's terrifying—but I've come across both. I think with an open audition for this project, we're going to see a lot of people who are excited about it, so we won't see those terrified people. But I've also gone to theater companies and taught, like, ... improvisation for scripted actors and had people terrified and literally asking for directions at every turn. ... I think, too, this specific project, being that it's a long-form narrative—we're doing improvised plays—I think for an improviser that can be scary, too, because it's not solely comedy-based. We're working at creating improvised theater, so we're really looking to touch all of the emotions and have those moments of sincerity and sadness and heartfelt moments, but also comedy as well. Improv is at its best when you're not aiming to be funny, when you're just

aiming to create real connection and genuine moments on stage.

Improvised plays—how long are these things going to be?

So, they're going to be 90 minutes long. ... Obviously, given that we're making up these stories every night, it'll be a different play based on some audience suggestion, based on whatever is inspiring in that moment for the actors. ... The one things we are certainly going to be doing is a musical. ... That will be the last of our shows. And we're also going to be doing an improvised murder mystery. I'm going to go ahead and put those two on the map now.

It's an open call. Anyone can show up to the next two audition days—both of them, right?

In the note to everybody and the messages that went out about the audition process, it says an improvisation background is certainly helpful. ... I think we saw that today [during the first auditions], with some experienced folks who have some background in improv. They looked great, and they did a fine job—but they also bring up the people around them. You don't have to have improv experience to be a part of this show. We'll take you on and teach you all about it. I'm also a big believer in the fact that having those wild card folks that have never done improv before will keep the improvisers that have experience on their toes. □

NOTES FROM THE NEON BABYLON

BY BRUCE VAN DYKE

Lighten up

Speaking of the Season of Lights, you wanna see a super cool, totally fab, incredibly bodacious light show this December? It's not exactly a Christmas Light Show, but then again, there are so many dadgum lights at this thing that it will totally work as a brain-boggling holiday experience.

In the California town of Paso Robles (about 40 miles north of San Luis Obispo on Highway 101) there's a most remarkable event taking place. It's called "Field of Light," created by artist Bruce Munro, and the title is a masterful achievement in understatement. Oh, it's a "Field of Light" all right—no less than 58,000 solar lights laid out in a lovely little valley of grass and oak trees. The result is some *serious* eye candy.

As in a non-stop Wow. As in Wow times a hundred. Or a thousand. Or 58,000. You pay your

\$30 and then wander around in the "FOL" for as long as you like until 9 o'clock closing time. It's all very casual and comfortable, and, yes, you've never experienced anything quite like it—and, yes, that includes Burning Man. The longer you wander in these dazzling acres, the more surreal and super dreamy it becomes, a vast landscape of pure, ever-changing color that's just relentlessly *pretty*—off the charts Pretty, with a chaser of OMG.

To see photos, just Google "Bruce Munro Field of Light" and check it out, or go to Sensorio-Paso.com. All the pix, tix and info you need is there. The last time I looked, there were still tickets available for all December shows, which are Thursdays through Sundays from now until the final night of Jan. 5. (It's been open since June, with reviews in the

Los Angeles Times and New York Times, among others.)

And Paso is a dandy little town to visit, with loads of cool motels and yummy cafes. And the wineries. Holy Zinfandel, Batman. In the last 30 years, the place has become a Neo-Napa, with literally hundreds of quality wineries doing their thing in the surrounding countryside. The weather over there on the Central Coast in December is often just as nice as Vegas or San Diego, if you're into sunny and 65. So a splash of good grape in the afternoon, the eye-bending experience of the "Field of Light" in early evening, followed by a scrumptious dinner in downtown Paso, leading to a top notch conkout. What's not to like about that lovely and unique little December getaway? From Reno, it's eight hours to Paso Robles. □



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