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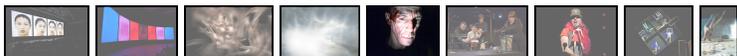


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## Festival of Firsts brings U.S. premieres to town



Measure Back (USA)



By **Alice T. Carter**

Published: Wednesday, Sept. 25, 2013, 9:00 p.m.

Ask Paul Organisak what's new, and the answer is likely to be "everything."

Beginning Sept. 27, the **Pittsburgh Cultural Trust's** International Festival of Firsts will present 11 contemporary art events, none of which have been seen before in the United States.

"They are some of the most interesting, exciting and challenging contemporary work being created," says Organisak, the trust's vice president of programming and the person charged with discovering and bringing these works to Pittsburgh.

During four event-packed weeks, the festival will offer an eclectic mix of theater, dance, music and visual arts created by contemporary artists from the United States and abroad. Two of the works — "Measure Back" and "The Pigeoning" — are

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### Details

Pittsburgh International Festival of Firsts

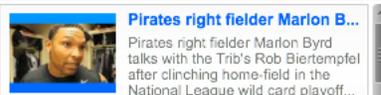
When: Sept. 26-Oct. 26

Admission: See individual events for specific dates and times, venues and ticket prices

Details: 412-456-6666 or [www.trustarts.org/first](http://www.trustarts.org/first)

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world premieres from U.S. artists.

Don't go expecting to find gallery walls lined with paintings or a revival of a Shakespeare tragedy.

"What's interesting about so much of the work is that it is new forms from artists working in cross disciplines," Organisak says. "That's what makes them interesting."

Many of the works to be seen in galleries and theater spaces blur the traditional boundaries as they draw on dance, music and spoken word as well as puppetry, projections and acrobatics.

• Chicago-based Austrian artist Kurt Hentschlager's "Zee" (Sept. 27 to Oct. 27 at 943 Gallery) uses fog, strobe lighting and a droning soundscape to create a full-immersion experience.

• "Hans was Heiri," (Oct. 18 and 19 at [Byham Theater](#)), created by Swiss artistic collaborators choreographer Martin Zimmerman and composer Dimitri de Perrot, challenges seven performers who inhabit a huge, rotating four-room world where ceilings become floors and a door can transform into a chasm.

• New York artist Robin Frohard's "The Pigeoning" (Oct. 9, 10, 12 at 937 Gallery) combines Bunraku puppetry, video and original music for a full-length exploration of obsessive compulsion, safety and order in an end-of-the-world context.

"It's quite funny," Organisak says.

It's not accidental that the trust's International Festival of Firsts overlaps dates with the 2013 Carnegie International art exhibit, from Oct. 5 to March 10 at the [Carnegie Museum of Art](#).

Having two major events running simultaneously should help get people's attention in the region as well as nationally and internationally.

"Our goal is to maintain a spotlight on Pittsburgh and (demonstrate) that Pittsburgh supports international work," Organisak says. "I hope it builds an excitement around them and that the higher concentration (of both events) feeds off each other."

Alice T. Carter is the theater critic for Trib Total Media. She can be reached at 412-320-7808 or [acarter@tribweb.com](mailto:acarter@tribweb.com).

**The Rubber Duck**

To launch the Pittsburgh International Festival of Firsts, the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust will be closing the Roberto Clemente Bridge to welcome the Rubber Duck Project on Sept. 27 near the Clemente Bridge, Downtown. Festivities include the launching of a four-story-high, three-story-wide rubber duck, created by internationally renowned Dutch artist Florentijn Hofman, which will be on display on the Allegheny River through Oct. 20.

The duck has been on display in Amsterdam, Lommel (Belgium), Osaka, Sydney Harbour, Sao Paulo and Hong Kong. Another version of the duck is currently floating in the port of Kaohsiung, Taiwan.

The duck is making its U.S. debut in Pittsburgh. According to the artist, the rubber duck knows no frontiers, it doesn't discriminate and doesn't have a political connotation.

"It keeps on smiling to you, you know. It says, 'Don't you worry, laugh, be happy!'" Hofman said at the launching event in Taiwan.

The bridge party will run in tandem with the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust's Fall Gallery Crawl in the Cultural District, a free quarterly showcase of art and entertainment. There also will be a night market on the bridge with food, art vendors and entertainment. The bridge party and gallery crawl, both from 5:30 to 10 p.m. Sept. 27, are free.

— JoAnne Klimovich Harrop

Compagnie Marie Chouinard

Two 35-minute ballets by the remarkable Canadian choreographer Marie Chouinard kick off the Festival of



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What's This?

Two 30-minute dances by the remarkable Canadian choreographer Marie Chouinard kick off the Festival of Firsts on Sept. 28. She's been commissioned internationally to create new works, has won an armload of awards and honors and formed her troupe, Compagnie Marie Chouinard, in 1990.

"For me, it's all about the human being and its relationship to the cosmos," she said in an interview in Dance Magazine. "This can include spirituality and eroticism. For some, this is a surprise, but that's an accident of our society, which is not very advanced. My interest is to explore all of human life in an open, free way."

The program includes the U.S. premiere of "Gymnopedies," which was first performed in Lisbon, Portugal, in June and is set to music by Erik Satie. Each of the dancers in turn play Satie's exquisite piano pieces while the others dance.

"Gymnopedies" is said to be filled with loving and erotic duos, and has an appreciation of the unexpected and the passage of time.

Chouinard's other piece is "Henri Michaux: Movements," to music composed by Louis Dufort; it was first performed at the Vienna International Dance Festival, in Austria, in August 2011.

The choreographer was inspired, one might say directed, to create this work when she discovered Michaux's book "Mouvements," which includes a long poem and 84 pages of ink drawing by the Belgian painter.

"I realized after many, many years of liking it that this book is like dance notation, as if he had been drawing all those figures on the page like dance notation waiting for a choreographer to take it as a basis," she says. "I decided to do that and have had much fun doing it."

The performance starts at 8 p.m. Sept. 28 at the Byham Theater, Downtown. Admission is \$19 to \$55.

— Mark Kanny

'Kiss & Cry'

Process and product merge in a visually poetic dance and theater piece that unfolds on the screen as it's created in front of you.

Fingers do the walking, dancing and wandering through a miniature landscape of buildings and trains, becoming the characters in a tale of a woman nearing the end of her life and reminiscing about her greatest loves.

At the same time, real-world creators manipulate the technical elements of a tabletop set in full view of the spectators while a live-action camera transfers the carefully created imagery to a screen.

The resulting projection creates a blend of dance and fantasy that's being built simultaneously in front of them at each performance.

A collective creation of Charleroi Danses, the Choreographic Centre of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation in Belgium, "Kiss & Cry" will have performances at 8 p.m. Oct. 2 to 4 at the [New Hazlett Theater](#), 6 Allegheny Square, North Side. Admission is \$25.

— Alice T. Carter

'The Pigeoning'

This full-length, live performance from New York artist Robin Frohardt uses Bunraku puppetry, video and original music to explore the ideas of safety, order and obsessive compulsion surrounding a belief that the end of the world is coming. The main character is Frank, a Bunraku puppet that works in an office in the early 1980s and is absorbed and transformed by his pigeon obsession. Pigeons, to Frank, embody the chaos and filth of the natural world. The pigeons start to aggravate Frank, who is paranoid and believes that the birds are plotting against him. "The Pigeoning" will be performed at 7 p.m. Oct. 9, 10 and 12 at 937 Liberty Ave., Downtown. Tickets are \$25.

— Kellie B. Gormly

'It's Dark Outside'

The newest play by Tim Watts, Arielle Gray and Chris Isaac combines puppetry, mask, animation and performance to tell a story about aging, getting lost and not wanting to be found. "It's Dark Outside" is based on research about Alzheimer's disease and Sundowner's syndrome, and the moving show explores themes of redemption, adventure and dementia. The show is a production of Perth Theatre Company in Australia. "It's Dark Outside" plays at 9 p.m. Oct. 9, 10 and 12 at Pierce Studio, 805-807 Liberty Ave., Downtown. Tickets are \$25.

— Kellie B. Gormly

'Hans was Heiri'

Perspectives are constantly changing in "Hans was Heiri," the innovative theater piece created by choreographer Martin Zimmermann and composer Dimitri de Perrot, which will be performed Oct. 16 to 18.

The action takes place in a huge, four-room rotating box in which seven actors, dancers and acrobats cope with a world in which a floor will become a ceiling, and furniture becomes falling objects. "Hans was Heiri" was first performed in January 2012, in Lausanne, Switzerland.

The performances start at 8 p.m. Oct. 16 to 18 at the [August Wilson Center](#), Downtown. Admission is \$18 to \$25.

— Mark Kanny

'Measure Back'

Two New York City-based artists — Christopher McElroen and T. Ryder Smith — created and perform this examination of the responsibilities of citizens and media outlets in their reactions to war.

The immersive theater experience uses dark humor and audience participation to examine conflicts as ancient as the Trojan War as well as those that seize today's headlines.

Performances are at 8 p.m. Oct. 22 to 26, Fifth Floor, Baum Building, 818 Liberty Ave., Downtown. Admission is \$25.

— Alice T. Carter

'The God That Comes'

Something raucous this way comes when Hawksley Workman takes the stage for a one-man performance.

Sex, wine and rock 'n' roll are on the bill in this production from 2b theater company in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Drawing on Euripides' ancient Greek play "The Bacchae," Workman re-creates the story of Bacchus, the Greco-Roman god of wine, and a world ruled by a greedy king.

When his oppressed subjects stage a wine-fueled revolt of ritual madness and ecstasy, the king responds with a vicious confrontation.

Performances are 10 p.m. Oct. 24 to 26 at [Cabaret at Theater Square](#), 655 Penn Ave., Downtown. Admission is \$25.

— Alice T. Carter

Visual arts

Four exhibits opening Sept. 27 in the Cultural District make up the visual-arts component of the Pittsburgh International Festival of Firsts.

"Hive" will be on display at Wood Street Galleries, Downtown, through Dec. 31. The brainchild of Chicago-based Austrian artist Kurt Hentschlager, it's a 3-D-animated, computer-generated audio-visual installation that features a vortex of human figures choreographed to appear as if an interconnected hive swirling out in deep space.

Hentschlager has a hand in the other installations, as well.

Created in collaboration with Austrian artist Ulf Langheinrich, both "Model 5" and "POL" are large-scale, video and sound installations that manipulate mechanical rhythms and multiple images to create a sense of schizophrenia. They'll be at SPACE, 812 Liberty Ave., Downtown, through Oct. 20.

Then there is "Zee," another Hentschlager creation visitors can step into that features intense stroboscopic light in combination with thick, artificial fog, resulting in a loss of spatial orientation and, ultimately, no depth of field or 3-D vision. It's in a space all its own, further up the street, at 943 Liberty Ave., through Oct. 27.

Because of intense strobe effects, the "Zee" exhibit is restricted to those 18 or older. Now, if that doesn't say, "Get ready for a disorienting experience," we don't know what else does.

All the exhibits are free and will be open late during the Gallery Crawl on Sept. 27. Hours for all three galleries during the festival are from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesdays and Thursdays, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sundays.

— Kurt Shaw

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