
Cell: (415) 205-6515 • lisag@igc.org • FlyingActorStudio.com

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Media Contact: Lisa Geduldig - lisag@igc.org
Cell: (415) 205-6515 (DON'T PUBLISH)

Flying Actor Studio Presents... UP FOR AIR!

*Mime Songs, The Miss American Dream Show, Words from a Cuban Father,
Mingalaba, and The Great Garbolski*

Fri-Sat February 17 & 18 and Fri-Sat March 3 & 4, 2023 at 8pm

Stage Werx, 446 Valencia St. San Francisco, CA 94103

Tickets (\$25): EventBrite.com

San Francisco, CA... Recent catastrophes have happened — climate upheavals, poverty, war, and a pandemic — like what's new! In the beginning, the mimes and clowns were always there to provide relief, insight, humor, and clarity to the predicament. Today is no different. Laughter helps one to find oneself, and satire and commentary reveal hidden truths. After several years of pandemic and political/social lunacy, we're all coming up for fresh air, re-surfacing, climbing out of the abyss, artists taking deep breaths again, meeting the public again after being submerged for so long. Over the course of two weekends, Flying Actor Studio founders James Donlon and Leonard Pitt will host UP FOR AIR! - four evenings of physical theater — madcap, lyrical, and poetic responses to the recent world challenges, and be joined by local talented guests. It's a palate of deliciousness as it salutes a unique San Francisco heritage.

San Francisco has always been a land of dreams and sensual textures. It is no surprise that internationally recognized mimes and clowns have made their stand in this foggy City by The Bay —from landmark stand up comedian Lenny Bruce to Bill Graham's classic rock musicians to comedian and actor Robin Williams, Robert Shields, The San Francisco Mime Troupe, The SF Clown Conservatory, The Pickle Family Circus, Bill Irwin, Geoff Hoyle, John Gilkey, and Flying Actor Studio.

San Francisco is a space to innovate and celebrate what it's like to be alive. Thousands run to the ocean in the Bay to Breakers, celebrate The Giants, The 49ers, The Warriors championships, and Pride, while modern Flower Children still flock to the park. The City has been a haven for experimentation and flights of fancy forever. The physical theater artists of San Francisco have made their mark and always tried to put reason into a mixed-up world. We celebrate this history - especially now!

FLYING ACTOR STUDIO:

In 2008 after a 40-year international teaching and performing career, James Donlon was inspired to create a physical theater school in San Francisco building on the rich history of clowning, mime, and circus that had thrived in the city for decades. Donlon invited fellow master teacher, Leonard Pitt, to share this vision, and together in 2009 they founded the Flying Actor Studio, one of the few centers in North America devoted to movement theater. In the '70's Donlon and Pitt had operated nationally known studios in The Bay Area as part of a vanguard of iconic artists that included Robert Shields, Geoff Hoyle, Bill Irwin, and The Pickle Family Circus. The Flying Actor Studio flourished in San Francisco as an artistic heartbeat for several years. The central

location was near the corner of First and Market, on the edge of the Financial District. A full floor loft space supported a conservatory program and night classes, and studio performances were also presented. The classes attracted students from across the US and internationally. Students work with world-class master teachers who pass on secrets gained through a life in the theater. Students learn the great world theater traditions of physical expression, mask, Neo-classic clown and mime, all sparked by a restless imagination. Students learn how to perform rare skills, tell wonderful stories, and evoke the truth. Flying Actor Studio is now based in Ashland, Oregon.

ARTISTS' BIOS AND SHOW DESCRIPTIONS:

JAMES DONLON (Host and Performer, *Mime Songs*, all 4 days) has been a celebrated international performer, master teacher, and director of mime and physical theatre since 1970 appearing throughout North America, Europe, and Latin America to enthusiastic audiences. The New York Times has called Donlon's work "An extraordinary blend of skill and lunacy." Donlon is the only mime invited to perform with legendary San Francisco entertainer Robert Shields of the CBS Shields & Yarnell show. Donlon was film movement coach for Oscar winners Javier Bardem, Kathy Bates and Frances McDormand, and created TV fight choreography for Linda Ronstadt. Among his former students are San Francisco's Tony award winner Bill Irwin and TV/film star Benjamin Bratt, who says "The overall impact of his craftsmanship and unique teaching style continue to influence my work in nearly every acting job I do." Donlon has been on the faculties of many noted acting schools including San Francisco's The American Conservatory Theater, and presented residencies with historic institution El Teatro Campesino. Donlon was the founder of San Francisco's Menagerie Mime Theatre studio in 1973, and the Flying Actor Studio with Leonard Pitt in 2009. www.jamesdonlon.com

Mime Songs - A collection of contemporary mime works probing all of us, with Donlon's own athletic technique and a reverence for Free Fall. Silence has never been so noisy!

LEONARD PITT (Host and Performer, all 4 days) began his performing career in 1963, when he studied mime in Paris with Etienne Decroux, eventually becoming Decroux's assistant. In 1970 Pitt settled in Berkeley where he established the Leonard Pitt School of Movement Theatre attracting students from around the world. Pitt studied mask theatre in Bali and was honored to perform with his teacher in temple and village festivals. His solo performances, *2019 Blake*, *Meantime*, and *Doppo-Clown of Yesteryear*, received wide critical acclaim. He was a founding member of George Coates Performance Works and presented his work at universities, theaters and festivals around the world. In 1986 he co-founded the Life on The Water theatre in San Francisco presenting original work. Pitt and movement artist Ruth Zaporah collaborated on a two-person show, *Seduction*. In 2009, Pitt and James Donlon opened The Flying Actor Studio in San Francisco offering a full time physical theatre program. Pitt has written three history books on Paris. His memoir, *My Brain on Fire- Paris & Other Obsessions*, was released in 2016. His motto: Find your inner maniac. All the fun goes to the obsessed. Pitt as co-host will dip into his repertory of unusual theatrical offerings providing a short glimpse of how his art influences us all. www.leonardpitt.com

MICHAEL HAYS (Performer, *The Great Garbolski*, February 17) studied mime/clown at Flying Actor Studio, clown at SF Clown Conservatory, Acting at CSU, and Improv at iO and BATS. He has performed his solo material at the Arcats Fringe Festival, Lunacy Festival, Piano Fight, and the Marsh in San Francisco. He can be seen performing and singing with the Sour Mash Hug Band and Zla Vila, both from San Francisco.

The Great Garbolski: A solo seven character clown odyssey. The Great Garbolski puts on the family show he always dreamed of. Get to know the eccentric Garbolskis! See Uncle Tibi wrestle the Sitsquatch. Find out what Gisela has in her giant bag. Try to avoid stepdad Jimmy E. Honkenstern as he wanders the theater working security. The brothers Garbolski make you laugh, cry, eat a pickle. An absurd exploration of family, intergenerational trauma, dictators, pickles and what it means to be American.

JAMES SUNDQUIST (Performer, *Mingalaba*, February 18) “Living cartoon” James Sundquist is a Bay Area based artist. His solo works have won best of the San Francisco Fringe 3 times: *Expeditious Intent* (2017), *Mingalaba* (2018), and *Aeon* (2019). He is currently developing a new work for deaf audiences with Juliana Frick called *Senseless*. James studied at the Flying Actor Studio with James Donlon and Leonard Pitt.

Mingalaba is a channel-flipping exploration of personal pain and good-humored resilience. This experimental piece explores madness, pantomime, punk, comedy and the absurd. Created as a one-hour physical improvisation, the show is extremely minimal and fast moving and a rollercoaster ride of surprises for the audience. No coffee required. *Mingalaba* reeks of the pure enthralling and chaotic energy of mindlessly clicking through TV channels on a humid summer afternoon. There’s nothing mindless about Sundquist’s performance though, as he commands you through a series of winding and awe-inspiring sketches and tidbits that cause everything you think you’ve learned about the show to come crashing down at your feet. Allow yourself to be transported to strange worlds as beguiling as TV, but without all the guilt of a Netflix binge. The show, which won Best of the Fringe 2018 and Self Production Independence Award for Boulder Fringe 2019, has been performed at festivals in California, Oregon, and Colorado.

SIERRA CAMILLE (Performer, *The Miss American Dream Show*, March 3) studied with James Donlon in the Southern Oregon University BFA Actor Training Program and at the Flying Actor Studio. She grew up talking too loud and taking up as much space as possible. After wading in the worlds of dance and theater, she has found circus to be a place that embraces her poignant skills as a physical theater artist, aerialist, and clown. Camille, an avid collaborator and leader, co-founded Levity Aerial Troupe and Skytopia Aerial Arts. Specializing in aerial silks and physical theater, audiences have called her “an electrifying beam of positivity and happiness in this cynical world.” She earned a BFA degree in Theater Performance and a certificate in Nonprofit Management from Southern Oregon University. She’s currently talking loudly and dancing about in Oakland.

The Miss American Dream Show serves it up with satire and physical comedy. Prepare to be saved by The Church of All Screens! Everything loved by the red, white, and blue. Blanca Fiberton delivers thought-provoking snacks about immigration, the second amendment, and her very own church! Laugh your way through these unpopular truths with American Hero, Blanca Fiberton.

ALINA CEÑAL (Performer, *Words from A Cuban Father*, March 4) is Cuban born, arriving in Miami at the age of 4 with *clave* in her veins, the love of rhythm and dance has stayed with her ever since! As a natural physical comedian, Ceñal has always enjoyed making people laugh. While attending the University of South Florida as a dance major, she performed at Ringling Brothers Circus World as an aerialist. Next came Hollywood for 20 years working in television, theater, and film. Her TV credits

include: *The Shield*, *Judging Amy*, *Days of our Lives*, *Diagnosis Murder*, *Quantum Leap*, *Matlock*, and *Webster*. Her stage credits include: San Diego Rep, LATC, Odyssey, South Coast Rep, Mark Taper Improvisational Theater Project, Bilingual Foundation of the Arts, and the international company of *A Chorus Line*. Teaching children life skills through the magic of theater has been the center of Ceñal's work. She founded Kids Acting Out-West in 2005 for after-school curriculum and summer camps. She has toured her solo bilingual show *Words from a Cuban Father* nationally and internationally. After reconnecting with her motherland, she created *Cuba: My Return*, and recently played two different Cuban grandmas in *Christmas Contigo* and *In The Heights* at the Oregon Cabaret Theatre.

Words from A Cuban Father, created and performed by Alina Ceñal and directed by James Donlon, is Mambo, carnival, revolution, Fidel and my dad, Miami, hotdogs, drag queens, the circus, and Hollywood. Music and dance highlight Ceñal's bilingual experience of being yanked from her native Cuba as a child and yearning to return. The strong presence of her father guides her through the American cultural landscape.

Video clips:

- James Donlon and Company: www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbpWMw2CLp8
- James Donlon FISH classic mime: www.youtube.com/watch?v=c24ZtO-Cpb0&t=18s
- James Donlon Wild Kettle mime: www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPg2iHH8JLw
- Alina Ceñal, *Words from A Cuban Father*: youtu.be/mVJC-jAeYNE
- Sierra Camille, *The Miss American Dream Show*: youtu.be/S1p8oGC0Nzc

For Calendar Editors:

WHAT: Flying Actor Studio Presents... UP FOR AIR!
Mime Songs, *The Miss American Dream Show*, *Words from a Cuban Father*,
Mingalaba, and *The Great Garbolski*

Friday, February 17:

Mime Songs by James Donlon AND *The Great Garbolski* by Michael Hays

Saturday, February 18:

Mime Songs by James Donlon AND *Mingalaba* by James Sundquist

Friday, March 3:

Mime Songs by James Donlon AND *The Miss American Dream Show*
by Sierra Camille

Saturday, March 4:

Mime Songs by James Donlon AND *Words from A Cuban Father*
by Alina Ceñal

James Donlon and Leonard Pitt will host all four evenings.

WHEN: Fri-Sat February 17 & 18 and Fri-Sat March 3 & 4, 2023 at 8pm

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