



2003 Performers



LUNATIQUE FANTASTIQUE

A wad of newsprint, a sweatshirt, a creature made from PVC pipe tubes.... Performance alchemist Liebe Wetzel and her ensemble release the sweet, sad, naive, and lustful beings inside "ordinary" objects. In the absence of language, her puppets speak universal truths. You'll never look at inanimate objects the same way again.

LIEBE WETZEL, Artistic Director, is the artist formerly known as Too Too Tomato, and has performed in a variety of incarnations including puppeteer, performance artist, mime, stilt walker, and

clown at a staggering number of fairs, festivals, and theaters throughout the West Coast. She is a graduate of the Dell Arte School of Physical Theatre, and has trained with Keith Johnstone at the Loose Moose Theatre in Canada. She holds a BA in Biology and Biochemistry from Rice University. In 1999 Wetzel debuted her now award-winning style of ordinary object puppetry with a collection of vignettes for adults, *Naked Foam* and *Objects in Predicaments*, written and performed by Wetzel with the assistance of director Jeff Raz. Since 2000, Wetzel and Lunatique Fantastique created *Snake in the Basement: The Prosecution of Rev. Bill Pruitt*, *The Wrapping Paper Capers*, a holiday-themed show for children and adults, and *Brace Yourself!* as well as *My Dinner With Lunatique Fantastique*. She has taught her unique puppetry style to teens in a residency program at Zeum, and to teen acting students at Cal Shakes' summer program. This holiday season, look for *Another Wrapping Paper Capers* at Zeum in December and January. For more information see www.lunfan.com. (Photo credit - Julie Feinstein)



AXIS DANCE COMPANY

Founded in 1987, AXIS Dance Company has created an exciting body of work developed by dancers with and without disabilities. They are in the forefront of paving the way for a powerful and inclusive dance form, physically integrated dance. AXIS has performed in theaters and dance spaces at its home base in the Bay Area, on tour throughout the U.S., as well as in Germany and Siberia. The Company has become internationally known for its high artistic and educational standards and innovative movement vocabulary. Now a ten-member ensemble under the Artistic Direction of Judith Smith, their stellar repertory includes works by AXIS choreographers,

Stephen Petronio, Bill T. Jones, Joe Goode, Joanna Haigood, and Sonya Delwaide.

In addition to the many awards, grants, and notable performances credited to Axis, Oakland City Council has proclaimed March 10, 2002 as AXIS Dance Company Day in honor of their performance in the Olympic Arts Festival and their artistic achievements of the past 14 years.

AXIS Dance Company maintains an extensive community education and outreach program. Dance Access and its youth component Dance Access/KIDS! offers an ongoing program of classes for adults and youth of all abilities. Find out more about Axis at www.axisdance.org

JUDITH SMITH, Artistic Director, is a founding member of AXIS. Prior to becoming disabled in a car accident at age 17, Judith was a champion equestrian on the Colorado Hunter/Jumper circuit. She transferred her passion for riding to dance after discovering contact improvisation in 1983. She has studied movement in a wheelchair extensively through modern dance, improvisation and martial arts. *(photo credit - Margot Hartford)*



AGUAS DA BAHIA

Aguas Da Bahia was created in 1998 to share the rich cultural dance and drumming traditions of Central and Northeastern Brazil. The company presents lesser-known dances from the deep well of Brazilian art and culture, showcasing a panorama of original choreographies from traditional Orixá and folkloric dances to the hip urban dance of “samba reggae.” In 2000, Aguas Da Bahia collaborated with Axe Abada, a capoeira performance group, and they also performed in the San Francisco Carnival and Oakland Carajama Carnival parades in 1998 and 2001, at the S.F. Cow Palace, and at Stanford University. In 2002, Aguas Da Bahia was well received in

their first performance at the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival, with “Conto Nordestino” a work which showcased the “Xaxado” dance, a light-hearted and energetic folk dance, and “Bomba Meu Boi” a traditional dance/play from Brazil’s Northeast interior.

TÂNIA SANTIAGO, a native of Bahia, Brazil, is the choreographer and Artistic Director, formed Aguas Da Bahia in 1998. While her specialty is folkloric and contemporary Afro-Brazilian dance, Tania has studied Jazz, Ballet, West African, Afro-Cuban and Modern dance as well. She spent 6 years working with the renowned performance group Olodum, and has taught, danced and choreographed for other well-known companies in Brazil including Shama, SESC/SENAC, Grupo Pastoril da Bahia, Viva Bahia, and Bale Folclorico da Bahia. Residing in California since 1997, Tania teaches throughout California and in New Orleans, Hawaii, New York, Florida, Seattle, and Vancouver, Canada. She regularly teaches at the Abada Capoeira Brazilian Cultural Academy, and Rhythm and Motion Dance Center in San Francisco. For more information see www.aguasdabahia.com



CHIH-TING SHIH

Chih-Ting Shih's grew up in Taiwan, in a dancing household in which her mother was a well-know teacher of Chinese folk dance. Under her mother's tutelage, Shih began studying ballet and modern when she was 10 years old. When she turned 15, Shih placed first against over 1,000 dancers for entry into her five-year study at the National Taiwan Academy of Arts. She then went on to receive her degree at Chinese Cultural University. Wanting to continue her life in dance, she came to America and studied at California Institute of the Arts near Los Angeles, majoring in modern dance, ballet and choreography.

Shih has danced internationally with Taipei Ballet Theater, Rondo Ballet Theater, Hua-Gong Dance Company and is a current artist in residence with the Oakland Ballet Company. She has performed numerous ballets such as Nutcracker, Swan Lake, Giselle, Le Corsaire, Cinderella, Pas de Six- La Esmerald, Paquita, Don Quixote and many more. Her original contributions in choreography have been recognized through various dance competitions, including the National Taiwan Dance Competition "Faded Memory" in 1999, National Taiwan Choreography Award Competition "Times" in 1998, and National Japan Kitakyushu & Asia Ballet Competition "Morn" in 1997. Recently she has taught dance to children while traveling with Oakland Ballet's "Young Audience of the Bay Area-2002" program. Shih appears in People Like Me 2003 courtesy of the Oakland Ballet.



MADZIMAI MBIRA

Madzimai means "women," and this group is a joining of 3 renowned women in the field of Zimbabwean dance and music. All leaders of their own performing groups and projects, they are joining forces for the first time for **People Like Me 2003!**

JULIA TSITSI CHIGAMBA is a dancer, singer and instrumentalist from Zimbabwe who was raised in the rich cultural traditions of Shona music and dance. Daughter of highly respected mbira player, Sekuru Tute Chigamba, she was a longtime member of Mhembero, the Chigamba family dance and mbira ensemble. Julia taught traditional music and dance in Harare, Zimbabwe for five years. She now performs and teaches Shona music and dance in the United States and Canada to diverse populations and a wide spectrum of age groups.

ERICA AZIM fell in love with Shona mbira music when she first heard it at the age of 16. In 1974, Erica became one of the first Americans to study mbira in Zimbabwe, and her teachers have included many of Zimbabwe's top mbira masters. Erica has recorded two solo CDs, including "Mbira: Healing Music of Zimbabwe" on the Relaxation Co. label. She currently teaches regional mbira workshop groups throughout the U.S. and internationally-attended mbira camps at her home in Berkeley, California. Erica also directs the non-profit organization MBIRA (see www.mbira.org), which makes field recordings available to mbira enthusiasts around the world and provides financial support to Zimbabwean mbira players and instrument makers.

KELLY TAKUNDA ORPHAN is a dancer, vocalist, percussionist, and songwriter who has performed both locally and abroad with various African/World Music groups, such as Babatunde Olatunji and African Rain, Mhembero, and the University of Zimbabwe Choir. After her year abroad studying at the University of Zimbabwe (1994), Kelly served as Co-Director of San Jose State University's World Music Choir (1995-99). She is a former member of Keith Terry & Crosspulse and was the creative director of Mutama, a female vocal/percussion ensemble (1998-2001). Currently, she is the music director at First Church Oakland and is also recording her second album, due out in June 2003.



MAHEA UCHIYAMAAND KaUaTuahine

Mahea Uchiyama has been a student of dance since her early childhood, raised within the discipline of the classical hula tradition. She holds a B.A. in Dance Ethnology and an MA in Pacific Islands Studies from the University of Hawai'i. In addition to her academic degrees, she has also studied extensively with one of Hawai'i's premier hula masters, Joseph Kamoha'i Kaha'ulelio. She has performed with numerous Hawaiian, Tahitian, and Caribbean dance ensembles, and has produced her own series of instructional and performance videos, CDs and cassettes of Hawaiian and Tahitian music and dance. She was also a featured soloist of North African Dance in the 1994 San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival.

In 1982 she founded the *Hui Pa Hula o Leianuenue*, a critically acclaimed Polynesian dance ensemble, which won numerous awards in the most prestigious Polynesian dance competitions in California and Hawai'i. Mahea received first place honors in solo Tahitian dance in the 1985 San Francisco Tahiti Fete. In addition to competing, her company highlighted the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival, the Festival at Lake Merritt, the Asia-Pacific Dance Festival.



Founding artistic director of the **KaUaTuahine Polynesian Dance Company**, she also is the director of the Center for International Dance in Berkeley. KaUaTuahine has highlighted many performances and events in the Bay Area, and in 2002 they traveled to Tahiti to study and one of Tahiti's preeminent dance ensembles, *Orihere Maohi*. Their journey has been chronicled in an award winning documentary film, *Black Pearl*. They perform Hawaiian, Tahitian, and

Maori dance, including the “poi” dance included in People Like Me 2003.



PAMPA CORTÉS

Pampa Cortés was born in Santiago del Estero, Argentina. He became a professional dancer at the age of 15. He has danced in El Ballet Folklórico Argentino of Mario Machaco & Norma Re, in El Ballet of Celia Queiro, and in El Ballet Argentino de Santiago Ayala "El Chúcaro" & Norma Viola, a premier Argentine folkloric company. He then founded his own folkloric dance company, Ballet Pampa, which performed at the country's most prestigious folkloric festival, at Cosquín, Argentina. Pampa was First Dancer and Assistant Choreographer for master tango dancer Juan

Carlos Copes, after which he performed as a soloist and in different stage productions over the years. He has traveled all over the world performing both tango and folkloric dancing, touring in most of South America, the US, Canada, Mexico, Japan, and many European countries. Pampa also appears in Argentine movies and television series, Japanese commercials, and on the covers of music CDs and in books.

He formed the production company, Tango A Media Luz, with Bay Area business partner, Patricia Jensen, and his troupe Pampa y Estrellas performed the dances of the gauchos in the 1997 San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival. His tango group, Ballet Pampa Argentina, studies and performs traditional Argentine tango. Pampa and his partner, Valeria Cortés, (Pampa's drummer in People Like Me 2003) direct the stage hit "¡Argentina! Tango & Malambos" for Tango A Media Luz, highlighting the traditional dances of Argentina. They also perform and teach as guest artists all over the world.