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IRVINE WEEKLY

JANUARY 16, 2019 • No. 7

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DISHERS WORTH DRIVING FOR**

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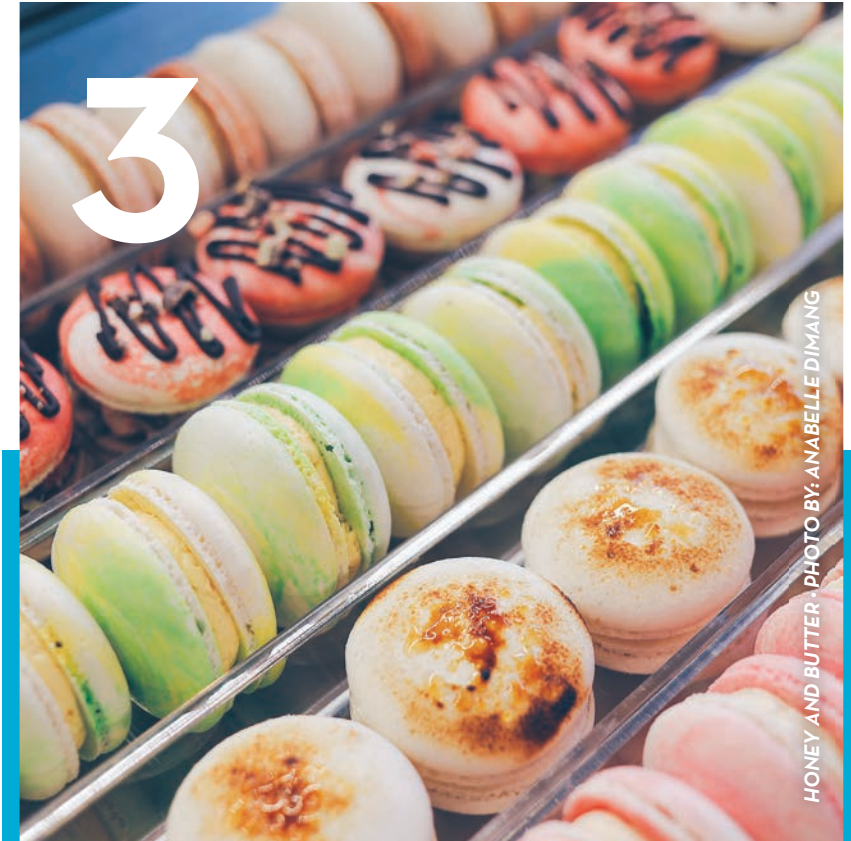
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HONEY & BUTTER • PHOTO BY: ANNABELLE DIMANG

DISHES WORTH THE DRIVE

THIS NEW MONTHLY COLUMN SPOTLIGHTS DISHES THAT ARE WORTHY OF THE DRIVE FROM LOS ANGELES TO IRVINE

BY: MICHAEL COOPER

Unbeknownst to many in Los Angeles, their southern neighbor Irvine is quickly becoming one of the best, most diverse culinary destinations in Southern California. While Los Angeles no doubt has many edible delights throughout its vast metropolis, there are some unique dishes that are not available in the City of Angels and that can only be found in Irvine.

Don't get us wrong, Irvine is not exactly a quick hop, skip and a jump

from Los Angeles. Without traffic, the commute is still a good 45-60 minutes; but when is there ever no traffic? With traffic, it can be sometimes double that. However, with that in mind, some of the food in Irvine is so good that it can make up for the time it takes to get there from L.A. Therefore, Irvine Weekly decided to start a new monthly series spotlighting dishes that are worth the drive from Los Angeles to Irvine. Each month, we'll spotlight two dishes from two different restau-

rants that we feel can only be found in Irvine. Some of these dishes are one of a kind and simply don't exist up north. Others may be similar to other dishes found elsewhere, but something about the one in Irvine makes it different or more special than its counterparts.

To kick off our series, we've decided to spotlight three restaurants (six dishes total) that are so good, they should not only be enjoyed by those in Orange County, but are also worth it for those in Los Angeles to come down and

enjoy. We have some sweets at Honey & Butter Macarons, some delicious ramen at HiroNori Craft Ramen and a unique brunch and dinner option at Bosscat Kitchen and Libations. Get out your stretchy pants and let us take you on a food tour of some of Irvine's best dishes!

Our first stop on our culinary tour of Irvine is for those with a sweet tooth: Honey & Butter Macarons. Located in the Irvine Spectrum, this unique bakery offers something rare these days: hand-made everything. "Our drinks are from scratch, all of our cookies are from scratch, the meringue, almond flour, everything," says Front of the House Manager Krysthel. And that's been the case since the start, over five years ago, when the owners, Leanne and Pawel Pietrasinski, were selling their macarons out of an air stream in Costa Mesa. They were able to open

FOOD

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the storefront in the Irvine Spectrum in 2016.

"When they just had the air stream, they would bake from home. It was mainly them two [and] maybe some other helpers," says Anabelle Dimang, Back of the House Manager and Baker. "So now we have a little under 40 employees that make up the front of the house and the back of house, and to see the growth is just amazing."

Honey & Butter has plenty of macaron options available, from their classic macarons to their dozen daily flavors, to rare flavors and character macarons. For those that may not know, macarons are cookies that originated in France. Not to be confused with macaroons, which are sweets made from coconuts or almonds, macarons are meringue-based and typically made with egg whites, sugar, almonds and food coloring. But the macarons at Honey & Butter aren't your typical macarons. "We're kind of a new take on macarons. [We're] not the traditional French macaron," says Dimang. "We don't age the macarons because we like the freshness of the daily bake."

Another unique aspect of Honey & Butter is their tie-in with pop culture and their themed events. "We've been working, especially in the past year, with a lot of marketing companies, so they'll reach out to us to promote certain films that are releasing and they'll provide giveaways, movie tickets, merchandise and we'll create character macarons along with that theme," says Dimang. "Different companies we've been working with are Atlas who have Persona 3 and Persona 5,

Pusheen and Tokidoki. [We even work with] some independent artists and they collaborate. They sometimes do a store takeover."

But of course the food worth the drive from L.A. is the macarons. With so many to choose from, how does one pick the right flavor? "If a customer is stumbling on their flavor options, we tell them to give us the options they like, whether they like tart, more subtle, more of a chocolate base, more sweet or less sweet," says Krysthel. "When it comes to more sweet, we go with more of the cereal bases [like] French toast and Fruity Pebbles or Cookie Butter. But if they prefer tart ones, of course we'd recommend more of the fruity flavor types. And then our number one that we try to push out is always a rare item because we don't have it too often and we don't want our customers to miss out on the flavors." Every week they rotate out about three rare flavors.

According to Dimang, because Honey & Butter is a small independent business, a lot of what they do at the Irvine location (as opposed to at "the lab" in Costa Mesa) is "research and development." "Typically, if we feel inspired or come up with an idea for a flavor or flavor combination, we're able to do some R&D as soon as that day," she says. "It's nice because our environment has a decent amount of creative freedom that we can test flavors out." So with so many flavors, which two flavors do we most recommend? The first dish that's definitely worth the drive from L.A. to Irvine is the Crème Brûlée, one of Honey & Butter's rare flavors. The bakers make the custard



in house to produce a delectable buttercream. For the brûlée aspect, they sprinkle sugar on the top shell and torch it. "It adds the wonderful crunch texture and visual appeal," says Dimang. "It's a lot of our favorite." Indeed, the cookie is able to perfectly encapsulate the taste of traditional Crème Brûlée.

The second dish worthy of the trek would be one of the character macarons, the Corgi. Shaped like the famous dog, it's almost too cute to eat - key word "almost." The Corgi macaron was created because the owners own two Corgis. "They are our unofficial mascot," says Dimang. "Our character macarons are all batter-based. Batter is time sensitive and breaks down, thus we have to manage time well when creating character macarons and laying down the different details. The consistency of the batter needs to be taken into account, as well as certain parts of the character needs to dry before laying details if we want to achieve depth." The rich sweetness definitely makes this a dish not to miss. In the near future, Irvine won't be the only home to Honey & Butter: They're currently developing another location at the SteelCraft Garden Grove.

The next restaurant on our list is Bosscat Kitchen and Libations, located right next to John Wayne Airport. First opening in 2014, General Manager Chris Daily describes the restaurant as a "southern style whiskey bar with a California twist." The story behind the inception of the restaurant is pretty unique as well: It all started when the owners were at another bar and got

some less than hospitable service.

"[They] ordered a Coors Lite and a shot of Jameson at a bar and the bartender was extremely rude and said we don't serve that kind of stuff here," Daily says. "And that sparked the idea of bringing old school customer service to a whiskey bar that does unique food and [has great] service. No matter if the guy's wearing board shorts and a tank top or [if another] guy's got a business suit on drinking a \$50 glass of wine, the bartenders and the staff make sure everybody's treated and incorporated into the conversation together. So it's one big party, no pretentiousness, and that's kind of the whole reason why the restaurant opened."

Indeed, it is a big party at Bosscat, and for those who like cocktails, especially whiskey cocktails, it's definitely a place to visit. Offering over 300 whiskeys, Daily says that the bar staff is very well versed and can make whatever you want. One popular drink that pops on and off the menu is the Kentucky Orange Blossom, made with Buffalo Trace whiskey. "If you took a Manhattan and an Old Fashioned and they had a baby, that's kind of how it would be," says Daily. "It's Elderflower liqueur and sweet vermouth with a Kentucky Bourbon and a little bit of orange bitters and orange drops on top, served on a big cube."

No doubt the Kentucky Orange Blossom may pair well with our first dish worth the drive from Los Angeles to Irvine: the 12 Hour Beef Short Rib. "We braise [the meat] for 12 hours and the meat is handpicked," says Daily. "We do our own black pepper sauce glaze

on scalloped potatoes with fried onion strings. It's one of the four [dishes from] the original 2014 menu and it's still on the menu. It's an amazing dish." We couldn't agree more. Braising the meat for 12 hours really makes it a unique dish that is definitely worth the trek from L.A. And the sauce really makes this short rib dish different from short ribs you'd get in any other restaurant.

The other dish is only available for Saturday and Sunday brunch but is truly worth the effort: Fruity Pebbles French Toast. "It's cheesy bread that we incorporate fruity pebbles into," says Daily. "We cut the [bread] up, stack the [slices] and we do a condensed milk syrup on top. And then [we put] fruity pebbles and fresh fruit on it. So of course [it's] completely Instagram worthy." The colors alone definitely make this dish Instagram worthy, but the condensed milk, strawberries and blueberries really make it tasty. As if the dish isn't unique enough, the bread that's used also sets it apart from a normal French toast dish. "It's a fun play on a French toast. We don't use traditional French toast bread, we use a little bit of a harder almost sourdough-y kind of texture with the condensed milk and the fresh fruit and everything," says Daily. "It's a very fun, unique dish to what we do. It's been very popular on the menu for a couple of years"

The next dishes worth the drive from L.A. to Irvine belong to one of the best ramen places in the city, HiroNori Craft Ramen. First opening in May 2017, the restaurant is named after its two owners: Hiromichi Igarashi and Tadanori Akasaka. While there are many

ramen places throughout Los Angeles, the reason why the ramen at HiroNori is worth the drive is because of its authenticity. As Igarashi explained, they have the "recipes and technique" to make truly great ramen. This comes from years of experience back in Japan. They worked for ramen shops in Japan over the course of a decade and then traveled throughout the country eating a lot of ramen.

"We traveled to eat ramen. I only had like 3-4,000 ramen, different kinds of ramen, but Nori has tried 6,000 ramen bowls and has all the notes that he's been taking," says Igarashi. "So we know all the good ramen shops all over Japan and we kind of combined all the good parts and then tried to find out what's the best to sell to attract the people [of Irvine]."

What brought Hiro and Nori to the United States was the desire to show the American people what good ramen truly is. "[About] 15 years ago [mainstream America just started] knowing what ramen is. I tried their ramen and it was really bad but people were still enjoying it so that's why we decided to come this country, to make the ramen shop," says Igarashi. So why Orange County specifically? "Orange County has a good diversity of culture all mixed, like lots of Asian culture, Latino culture and Americans," Igarashi says. And while Irvine was their first location, they opened a second location in Long Beach in May 2018 (so yes, it's probably an easier drive from L.A. to the Long Beach location, but since the Irvine one was their original restaurant, we still think it's

worth visiting). Soon enough, however, Angelinos won't have to drive to either location, as there are plans for HiroNori to open in Los Angeles, as well as in San Diego and San Francisco.

So what two dishes are really worth it? The first would be their Vegan Ramen, which contains sesame miso broth, broccolini, tofu, corn, bean sprouts, soy meat, baby kale and chili oil. Vegan ramen is a bit rare, but it's becoming more common. HiroNori's stands out from all the rest for a few reasons. "The broth is a little bit unique. We make the miso base by ourselves and I see most of the bases [at other ramen restaurants are bought, not home-made]," says Igarashi. The noodles are also handmade (not in house though). "Lots of places try to make the vegan option but it's not that good [because] they don't have the knowledge [that we obtained in Japan]," says Igarashi. "But [for] our vegan [ramen], lots of customers are surprised it's actually vegan [because] it's extra tasty. I think we have a really good combination of all the vegetables to make the flavor." We definitely agree.

The other dish worth the drive is a more traditional ramen, the Tonkotsu Ramen, which contains pork chashu, green onion, spinach, seaweed and bean sprouts. "[Niro is] from Hokkaido, which is very north, like 500-600 miles north from Tokyo and then I learned ramen in Tokyo and Yokohama," Igarashi says. "Our Tonkotsu is more like Yokohama style, which I and Nori learned and we both like the style."

Although the Tonkotsu Ramen may

be heavily influenced by the Yokohama region, a lot of their ramen is so unique and tasty because it's a mixture of all the ramen they tasted and studied throughout Japan. "[Our ramen is] authentic and also a little bit unique because we combine lots of different styles," Igarashi says. "It's not only from the one specific location but also other locations." Irvine is definitely lucky that Hiro and Nori decided to bring all of their ramen knowledge to Orange County for our enjoyment.

Whether you're a carnivore or vegan, prefer sweet or savory, are looking for dinner or brunch, or enjoy ramen or short ribs, there are definitely dishes worth the drive from Los Angeles to Irvine. And we've just scratched the surface of the culinary amazement that's available in Irvine. Come back next month for four more dishes that we highly recommend as worth the trip down south. Los Angeles may have a lot of food options, but Irvine is definitely giving it a run for its money.

Honey & Butter Macarons:
633 Spectrum Center Drive,
Irvine, CA 92618
www.honeyandbutter.com

Bosscat Kitchen & Libations:
4647 MacArthur Blvd,
Newport Beach, CA 92660
www.bosscatkitchen.com

HiroNori Craft Ramen:
2222 Michelson Drive #234,
Irvine, CA 92612,
www.hironoricraftramen.com



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STEEP CANYON RANGERS • SANDLIN GAITHER PHOTO

SPRING MUSIC GUIDE

PLENTY OF OPTIONS ABOUND FOR ORANGE COUNTY CONCERT-GOERS

BY: PAUL ROGERS

Fri. 1/25 MARTIN TAYLOR

It says much about the dexterity and intimacy of Martin Taylor's fingerstyle gypsy-jazz guitar that audiophile hi-fi maker Linn signed him to their record label in the 1990s to help demonstrate their equipment's legendary fidelity. A protégé of Ike Isaacs and former long-time Stéphane Grappelli band member, this affable Englishman has carved out a formidable solo career over the past 30 years, punctuated by collaborations with fellow virtuosos including Chet Atkins, Steve Howe, Frank Vignola and, most recently, Tommy Emmanuel. Arguably the most accomplished solo jazz guitarist on the planet, the unassuming

Taylor ushers Django Reinhardt's legacy forward with innate musicality and tingling sincerity.

At Dana Point Community House, also Sat. 1/26 at Mission Viejo Civic Center

Fri. 2/8 U.S. BOMBS

Bassist Stevie D's recent terminal cancer diagnosis will lend U.S. Bombs' current tour both incredible poignancy and an urgency well suited to the veteran O.C. outfit's restless street punk. Celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2018, U.S. Bombs was formed by its sole constant, former pro skater Duane Peters, but appeared to have exploded for good after 2013's

"Generation Kennedy No More" compilation album. However, four years later, the ultra-prolific Peters – who juggles multiple on-again-off-again bands with tumultuous lifestyle that would've long ago destroyed lesser mortals – announced an all-new, five-piece Bombs, and the band's first new studio album in a dozen years, "Road Case," was released in November.

At Marty's on Newport, Tustin

Sat. 2/9 STEEP CANYON RANGERS

While their association with (and championing by) Steve Martin put Steep Canyon Rangers on the mainstream map, in fact only two of their 11

albums have been collaborations with the superstar actor and accomplished banjoist. Indeed, their 2013 Grammy Award for Best Bluegrass Album was for the Martin-less "Nobody Knows You." Released in 2018, the live-in-the-studio "Out in the Open" finds the sextet doing what they do best, no overdubs needed, and gives fair warning of what to expect at the Barclay Theatre, with vocalist Woody Platt's understated storytelling wending its way amongst fiddle, mandolin, banjo and stand-up bass with a glow gently fanned by his bandmates' intuitive harmonizing.

At Irvine Barclay Theatre, Irvine

Tue. 2/12 KISS

While a second farewell tour is an incongruous concept, it comes as a little surprise from a b(r)and that's equal parts musical endeavor and marketing machine. Formed in 1973, arch glamsters Kiss played their first "final" tour in 2000-2001, but reunited within a year (albeit with a different lineup). This sophomore stab at hanging up their platform boots will apparently last for three years and be what guitarist/vocalist Paul Stanley – the sole Kiss constant alongside singing bassist Gene Simmons – describes as his band's "most explosive, biggest show." Stanley also teased that former members might make appearances on this mammoth trek but, either way, expect an utterly entertaining, over-the-top extravaganza of everything-bigger-than-everthing-else Kiss-ness.

At Honda Center, Anaheim

Thu. 2/14 PANIC! AT THE DISCO

At some point, one-time Las Vegas quartet Panic! At The Disco became just singer/multi-instrumentalist Brendon Urie. Yet this hasn't dulled its vivid 'n' varied vaudevillian pop and shamelessly gorgeous, mega-production stage show. While Panic! initially rejected the (lack of) Vegas music scene – recording its 2-million-selling debut album before even performing a show – Urie has slowly morphed into a Sinatra-esque Sin City lounge singer, with all the throw-back showmanship and vocal prowess this implies. An ultra-talented middle finger to his critics, Urie – flanked by whoever happens to be his band at the time, lately including a horn section – is ringmaster of a concert experience worthy of prime-time Mötley Crüe.

At Honda Center, Anaheim

Tue. 2/19 CYPRESS HILL

South Gate's Cypress Hill has carved a storied career from seamlessly intersecting two mainstays of American youth: hip-hop and herb. While their stoner synonymy has helped sustain the veteran quartet, there's so much more to their story: the first chart-topping Latino American hip-hop group, who also made fascinating forays into reggae (notably on 2004's "Till Death Us Do Part") and rock (2000's "(Rock) Superstar" remains a radio regular). Juxtaposing B-Real's cartoonishly nasal rhyming against Sen Dog's imposing,

prison-yard rant, with boldly psychedelic production by DJ Muggs, Cypress Hill's best work has a quirky 3-D quality laced with eccentric samples and open-minded nods to heavy metal.

At House of Blues, Anaheim

Sun. 2/24 KEIKO MATSUI

Nearly 40 years into her career, Keiko Matsui's frequent releases still sound more like inspired celebrations than contractual obligations. On 2016's "Journey To The Heart," her 27th solo album, the Japanese keyboardist joyously explores yet another twist on her New-agey smooth jazz, enlisting musicians from Cuba, Peru and Venezuela to lend an exotic Latin air. While her relentlessly melodic keys remain rightfully front and center, Matsui shows her self-confidence by allowing her collaborators to also carry entire passages. With "Journey," her most endearing record in a decade, and an enduring reputation as a magnetic live performer, now is the time to experience this feel-good phenomenon.

At The Coach House, San Juan Capistrano

Fri. 3/1 RED DRAGON CARTEL

It's a long way from headlining arenas as Ozzy Osbourne's right-hand man to bringing your own band to Santa Ana's modest, street-corner Malone's. But the outsize talents of guitarist Jake E. Lee – who collaborated with the Double-O during his 1980s heyday – transcend this change in fortunes. His Red Dragon Cartel is still making arena-worthy music, surroundings be damned. If you enjoy Lee-era Ozzy, or his subsequent Badlands outfit, you'll likely appreciate RDC. Lee's songwriting and agile, blues-informed playing remain utterly distinctive, and vocalist Darren James Smith even conjures a little Oz. Wafting Monster Magnet and early Alice in Chains, RDC isn't just for guitar-onados, with robust songs and soulful performances far eclipsing mere shredding.

At Malone's, Santa Ana

Sat. 3/2 SARAH BRIGHTMAN

Sarah Brightman's late-1970s disco-licious beginnings with London's Hot Gossip dance troupe offered little hint of her imminent tidal wave of a career. Today, she's the best-selling soprano of all time and credited with inventing the "classical crossover" genre. It was Brightman's collaboration with composer (and later

husband) Andrew Lloyd Weber, leading to starring roles in a string of hit '80s West End and Broadway musicals (plus the 40-million-selling "Phantom of the Opera London" cast album), that made her a household name. Her subsequent solo success has been stratospheric, spawning 180 gold and platinum awards, thanks to a famously chameleon pop/classical voice that's once again in full effect on inspirational 15th album, "Hymn," released in November.

At Honda Center, Anaheim

Thu. 3/14 DEE DEE BRIDGEWATER with the MEMPHIS SOULPHONY

Her storied career stretching back to the early 1970s, there's little left in the jazz world for Dee Dee Bridgewater to conquer. Among her generation's most celebrated voices, she's collaborated with the likes of Dizzy Gillespie, Ray Charles and Horace Silver, and scooped a trio of Grammy Awards. Her 2017 collection "Memphis... Yes, I'm Ready" marks a stylistic departure, celebrating Bridgewater's birthplace through strut-



DEE DEE BRIDGEWATER • PHOTO BY: JOE MARTINEZ

ting renditions of soul, rock 'n' roll, and R&B songs with Memphis associations. Injuries from separate freak falls at the turn of 2017 have barely slowed down the 68-year-old on stage, where she continues to slinkily stroll and cajole, albeit sans her signature high heels.

At Irvine Barclay Theatre, Irvine

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DEFENDING CONTROVERSIAL ART

IRVINE FINE ARTS CENTER AND THE CITY ITSELF TACKLE TOPIC OF CENSORSHIP

BY: SCOTT FEINBLATT

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: IRVINE FINE ARTS CENTER

Art can be a touchy subject. This is especially true when creative expression is used to reflect upon the darker realities of life. When juxtaposed with an art gallery as a family-friendly zone, such reflections can be censored. Recently, the Irvine Fine Arts Center experienced a controversy over an exhibit featuring explicit subject matter. The result of this controversy involves the restructuring of the process by which artists and exhibits will be screened by

the city.

Joseph Gerges is a professor at Irvine Valley College. He has been working as an artist for 20 years and currently teaches drawing and printmaking; his work has been internationally exhibited. When Gerges started working at Irvine Valley in 2012, he was also teaching at Chapman University, California State University at Fullerton, Laguna College of Art and Design and Art Center College of Design. As a condition of his new full-time position

as an art professor, Gerges was required to study printmaking, and he recalls, "The Irvine Fine Arts Center was ... the only open studio space for printmaking with workshop offerings in all of Orange County."

For the next five years, Gerges used Irvine Fine Arts Center to develop his printmaking technique and create a body of work. In late 2017, he submitted his proposal for a show there. "The Irvine Fine Arts Center had never really had a mid-career artist with such a

vast amount of work and international visibility show in the space," Gerges explains, "and I thought it would be a great opportunity for me to showcase what could be done with the support of a public space like the IFAC, while also bringing a high-caliber museum-quality show to the heart of Orange County, where art is often neglected."

The work intended for exhibition included images of animal carcasses and, in some cases, blood. "My work deals with death, life, hardship and struggle



while using animals as a metaphor for those experiences," Gerges explains. "[It] is inspired by personal, real-life experiences – the trauma, divorce, illness, and death that has inundated the lives of both my daughters and [me] over these last 7 years...I felt that creating this visual dialogue was a necessary endeavor, a creative statement that helped me rediscover healing and substance in my own life – and I felt it could do the same for others." He says, "The proposal was accepted and initially celebrated when we began the coordination process in early 2018."

Around six months later, IFAC's curator, Yevgenia Mikhailik, left the center, and then the trouble began. Since no new curator had been appointed, the curatorial role was assumed by the center's director, Pat Gomez. Gerges recalls a discussion with Gomez, "We had a bit of an uncomfortable talk. She didn't seem aware of the scope of the show and my work, but in speaking to the curator that [had] left, everything had been previously discussed in internal meetings and images were shared in depth prior to her departure. ... A week later, I received an invitation to meet [Gomez] at her office, where she raised concerns that some of the imagery may be deemed offensive to their audience of adults and young children.... I offered to edit the work to work around her needs [by omitting an image of a pig being slaughtered and one of an open carcass, which was reminiscent of Francis Bacon's work from the 1970s and Rembrandt's carcass painting from the 1400s], but she said that wouldn't be enough and that she was removing the option of the main

gallery, [and] offered to edit about 70% of the work and move [the exhibit] into a rear space – out of public view, or I could decline the show altogether."

Gomez did not respond to inquiries regarding this matter, but Irvine Weekly did receive a response from Irvine's Community Services Manager, Sheila Driscoll. Driscoll confirms that Gomez was acting on behalf of the city's interest as there was concern over how the images might affect children and families and that a "discussion ensued about how to present the artist's work in a way that would allow parents the opportunity to select this experience for their family and that possibly moving the work to another gallery location just off the entrance [of IFAC], would allow individuals the choice to view the exhibit."

Gerges views this redacted version of his contract as part of an ongoing trend of censorship at IFAC. He says, "There was a painting [by Kerri Sabine-Wolf] that dealt with suicide, that had won first place in a juried exhibition. They would not publish the image of the work and would also not promote the image in their marketing materials as it showed an individual holding a gun to their head with butterflies [instead of blood] flying out of the back of their skull." Given the option of a less prominent and significantly expurgated showcase, Gerges declined the offer and took to the internet with an open letter and a petition on Change.org. Gerges says that the petition garnered over 300 signatures in less than 48 hours and got the attention of Irvine's City Council, Mayor Donald P. Wagner, and the city manager, John Russo.

Gerges says that Russo apologized for the manner in which the situation had played out. He recalls Russo assuring, "This issue was never going to occur again and that the city had taken the decision-making process out of one individual's hands and made it a multi-tier system [with the details to be hashed out in 2019, when the commission meets and permanently adopts new protocols]." Russo offered Gerges the exhibition in accordance with the original agreement.

In a follow-up email, Russo also informed Gerges that the duration of his original show would be extended from one week to seven. Regarding concern for sensitive viewers, Russo's email pointed out that "the city will draft a disclosure statement to be posted in the facility during your show to provide a disclosure to those that may find any images disturbing."

Gerges bears no grudge against IFAC; furthermore, he will be donating 30 percent of the proceeds from his work to the center and for arts programming in Irvine. Additionally, he has spoken

with Russo about initiating a grant program for Orange County artists, which would be modeled after the Los Angeles County's California Community Foundation Grant, that offers \$25,000 to Los Angeles artists.

Despite the experience, Gerges is pleased with the way things worked out for him and for the city. Naturally, he is happy that guests will have an opportunity to view his works. As controversial as some of the material is, he says, "The etchings and prints were created in homage to the great masterworks of Rembrandt, Käthe Kollwitz and Goya, amongst others." Given Gerges' background and resume, it certainly seems that a vote to shield the public from his work would have been a disservice to the arts.

**Irvine Fine Arts Center,
14321 Yale, Irvine,
Feb. 9 to March 30
Artist talk on March 9 that will
include a book signing and celebrate
the release of his publication
"Quietus."**

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SLEEPING BEAUTY - PHOTO COURTESY: BARCLAY THEATRE

SPRING THEATER PREVIEW

ORANGE COUNTY OFFERS UP A TANTALIZING ARRAY OF TOP-TIER STAGE ENTERTAINMENT

BY: MICHAEL COOPER



MICHAEL JAMES SCOTT IN ALADDIN
PHOTO BY: DEEN VAN MEER

Theater is one of the oldest forms of art and entertainment (just ask Shakespeare!). Often when one thinks of theater, Broadway and New York City immediately come to mind. While the Big Apple may very well be the country's theater capital, Orange County has a diverse and celebrated offering of live stage entertainment for theater enthusiasts. Therefore, Irvine Weekly has put together a guide for what is coming to Orange County theaters this Spring.

Perhaps the biggest theater in Orange County is the Segerstrom Center for the Arts in Costa Mesa, just a hop, skip and a jump from Irvine. First opening in 1986 (as the Orange County Performing Arts Center), the Segerstrom Center is home to the Philharmonic Society of Orange County, the Pacific Symphony and the Pacific Chorale. In addition to these

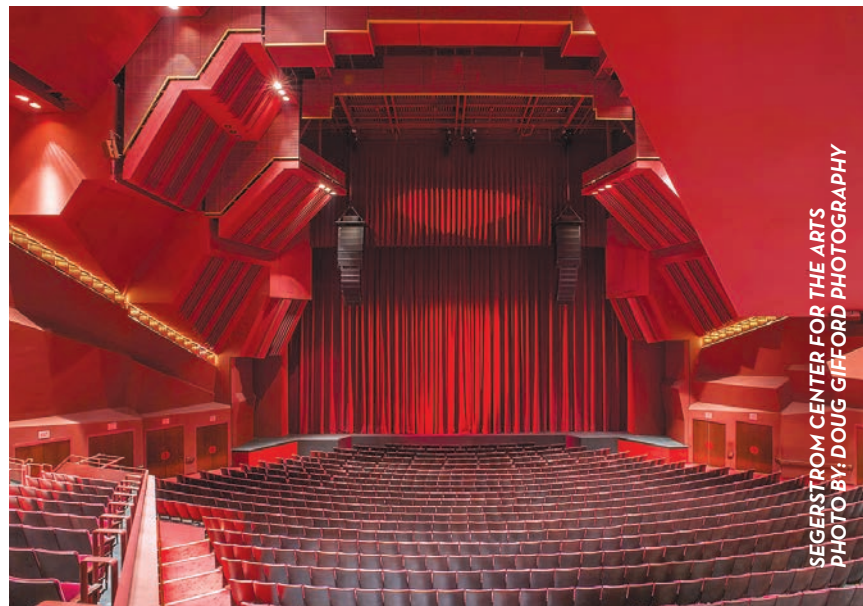
orchestral performances, the Segerstrom Center is usually the place to find the biggest Broadway shows on tour. So what's coming to the Segerstrom Center this Spring?

From March 6th through the 23rd, you can catch Disney's "Aladdin." Based on the animated film, the musical features everyone's favorite classic songs plus some new ones. The musical is actually a little closer to the filmmaker's original concept for the animated film before Robin Williams came on board. "We've actually restored the original vision of the film, which was to make it sort of [a] 1920s roadshow feel. Then Robin Williams came in and sort of switched things around and made it his own, which was great, but the original idea was to have sort of a musical comedy feel, which is what we're doing," says Adam Jacobs, who originated the

role of Aladdin on Broadway. "You can expect everything you know and love from the animated film, but then we've also added back in some songs and scenes that were cut."

Opening April 9th through April 14th, you can catch Andrew Lloyd Webber's famous musical "Cats." Once the longest-running show in Broadway history (it's currently fourth longest), "Cats" tells the story of a tribe cats on a single night when they make the "Jellicle Choice" to change one cat's future forever. The musical has been performed in over 30 countries and 15 languages since opening in 1981 and the music has since become iconic – hearing the song "Memory" live and in its original context may be worth the price of admission alone.

In May, from the 7th to the 19th, another classic musical comes to the stage at the Segerstrom Center: "Fiddler On The Roof." The musical tells the story of Tevye, a Jewish father trying to keep the traditions of his Jewish faith alive in his five daughters as they begin to rebel against ancient customs like marriage arrangements. All of this is set during the beginning of the 20th century in Imperial Russia when the Tsar chose to evict the Jews from their village. Although the musical first opened in 1964, this production has been said to be a "fresh and authentic vision" from Tony-winning director Bartlett Sher. Don't worry, though, all the songs people know and love from the show like

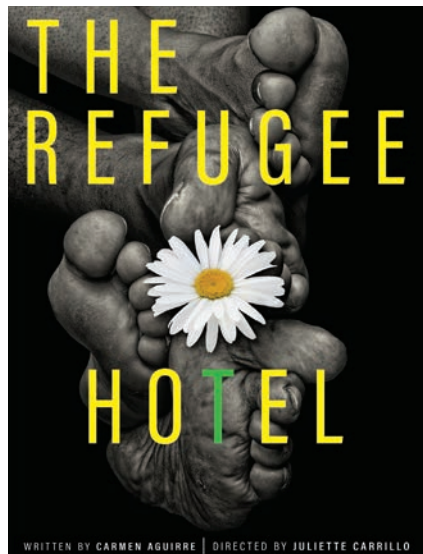
SEGERSTROM CENTER FOR THE ARTS
PHOTO BY: RMA PHOTOGRAPHY INCSEGERSTROM CENTER FOR THE ARTS
PHOTO BY: DOUG GIFFORD PHOTOGRAPHY

"Tradition" and "If I Were A Rich Man" are still intact.

The final production hitting the Segerstrom Center stage this Spring is "Charlie and The Chocolate Factory." Based on the classic Roald Dahl book, the musical still features songs from the movie like "Pure Imagination" and "The Candy Man" plus some new songs as well from the songwriters of "Hairspray." This production is said to show a "more contemporary" version of the story. Perhaps the newest of the shows coming to the Segerstrom Center this Spring, "Charlie and The Chocolate Factory" opened on Broadway in 2017. It will be running May 28th through June 9th.

If musical theater isn't your cup of tea, then you can check out a performance at the much more intimate Irvine Barclay Theatre First opening in 1990 as a joint venture between the city of Irvine, the University of California, Irvine and the private sector, the 750-seat "jewel box" theater runs as an independent non-profit organization. So what's coming up this Spring? In March, Spanish singer and flamenco artist Diego el Cigala takes the stage on the 1st. Two great orchestral presentations will be held that same month, with the UCI Symphony Orchestra performing on March 8th and the Mozart Classical Orchestra on March 10th. Jazz artist Dee Dee Bridgewater performs with the Memphis Soulphony on March 14th. On March 16th, "4 Girls 4" will feature four female Broadway stars live on stage: Maureen McGovern ("Little Women"), Donna McKechnie ("A Chorus Line"), Faith Prince ("Guys & Dolls") and Lillias White ("The Life").

"David Gonzalez: The Frog Bride," a comical take on the classic Russian tale, will take place on March 17th and one of Cuba's most sought-after dance companies, the Malpaso Dance Company, will be performing on March 20th. Festival Ballet Theatre will present their produc-



tion of "The Sleeping Beauty" on March 23rd and 24th and IUSD High School's "All Star Jazz Night," featuring Irvine's young Jazz artists, will be held on March 25th. "The Phantom Tollbooth," based on the classic children's book, will take the stage with two performances on March 27th. On March 28th, the "Bob Dylan of Iran," Mohsen Namjoo, takes the stage and the following day, crooner John Pizarella celebrates the 50th anniversary of Frank Sinatra's collaboration with bossa nova composer Antonio Carlos Jobim. Finally, on March 30th, country

artist Kathy Mattea performs.

April at the Barclay features the Orange County Gay Men's Chorus in "MenAlive: MOVE" on April 5th and 6th. On April 13th, Broadway staple Sutton Foster ("Anything Goes") takes the stage. April 18th features soul group Tower of



Power and "Tomas Kubinek: Certified Lunatic and Master of the Impossible," a blend of vaudeville, comedy and magic, hits the stage on April 26th. Jazz artist Christian McBride performs on April 27th and the Mozart Classical Orchestra will hold their season finale on April 28th.

In the final months of Spring, "Celebrate Music at UCI" on May 3rd will showcase students and faculty from UCI's Department of Music. "AcaLove: Southern California's A Cappella Festival" will take place on May 4th. Opera UCI will put

on their production of "Die Fledermaus" May 11th and 12th and Backhausdance, a "fusion of classic and contemporary dance" will take the stage on May 22nd. Finally, the UCI Symphony Orchestra will perform on June 7th. It's also worth checking out the Barclay's "National Geographic Live" speaker series, which are "thought-provoking presentations by today's leading explorers, scientists and photographers," taking place throughout the Spring as well.

Finally, we couldn't give a rundown of Orange County's theatrical presentations in the Spring without mentioning UCI Claire Trevor's School of the Arts Drama Department's productions: James Fritz's "Parliament" will be held Match 9-16th, "The Refugee Hotel" will be held April 27 through May 5th and UCI's production of "The Pajama Game" will run June 1st through 8th. With so much to choose from, Broadway may be 3,000 miles away, but Irvine definitely has its fair share of theater lined up for Spring 2019.

Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Drive, Costa Mesa, CA 92626, (714) 556-2787; www.scfta.org

Irvine Barclay Theatre, 4242 Campus Drive, Irvine, CA 92612, (949) 854-4646; www.thebarclay.org

UCI Claire Trevor School of The Arts, University of California, Irvine, Department of Drama, 249 Drama, Irvine, CA 92697, 949-824-6614; drama.arts.uci.edu/on-stage

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