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Rope Walking Takes Off in Moraga

By Sophie Braccini



Sara Kaiser practices rope walking at Moraga Commons Park.

Photo Sophie Braccini

Local residents are seeing a new group of users at Moraga Commons Park: rope walkers. They come with a rope, secure them to trees (with adequate bark protection), and practice their new sport. Kids start a few feet off the ground, while more advanced walkers go higher with longer ropes. Sara Kaiser, a 2010 Campolindo High School graduate and

UC Santa Cruz student says that she is one of the top three or four women in the world for the distance walked on a slack rope. "I started practicing at UC Santa Cruz; it is quite popular there," says the young woman who was practicing at the Commons July 18. "There are just a few thousands people training in this sport in the world, and few women." Kaiser says

that her longest walk was about 600 feet and that puts her at the top of female rope walkers. Kids strolling by were drawn to Kaiser, touching the rope and asking to try it out. She would love to someday teach local kids to rope-walk. "Children can start as soon as they know how to walk," says Kaiser, "it takes about a week to be able to walk 30 feet."

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Clive Worsley: From Town Hall Theatre to Cal Shakes

By Sophie Braccini



Clive Worsley

Photo Sophie Braccini

Even before becoming artistic director of Town Hall Theatre, Clive Worsley was associated with California Shakespeare Theater as a teaching artist. Now he is leaving his more than full-time job at THT to take direction of Cal Shakes' Artistic Learning program, which offers in-school residencies, after-school classes, and summer Shakespeare conservatories. There he will develop one of his passions, teaching through the arts, with a special focus on increasing the diversity and reach of an already successful program.

Worsley confesses to mixed emotions about leaving the artistic director's seat at THT. With his team, Worsley created a strong program and theater aficionados who liked his choices and appreciated his efforts to make THT productions first rate. He directed THT for five full seasons with many successful productions such as "The Importance of Being Earnest" and "The Glass Menagerie," as well as Shakespeare plays including "Twelfth Night" and "Measure for Measure." More innovative produc-

tions included Yasmina Reza's "Art," and Lisa Loomer's "Distracted," and of course no one will forget holiday classics such as "Scrooge" and "It's A Wonderful Life."

Under his leadership and that of Joel Roster, the education program flourished and in spite of some hardship (a devastating flood), the financial situation of the company improved dramatically.

"I am extremely proud the work we have done," he says. "THT has an excellent staff, passionate and dedicated board and supportive community. I am grateful to the board that took a chance with me, and to Lamorinda residents who opened their arms to me and made THT the success that it is."

Betsy Streeter, THT board president, states: "Town Hall Theatre Company has the unique privilege of being a vortex of developing talent. ... Clive Worsley is no exception to this rule."

Worsley has worked with Cal Shakes as a teaching artist since 2002 and Cal Shakes Artistic Director

Jonathan Moscone says that, from the start, "we felt he was a part of our company. We needed someone of his caliber to guide our education effort." Cal Shakes' mission is defined as striving "for everyone, regardless of age, circumstance, or background, to discover the relevance of theater in his or her lives."

Moscone describes the education portion of that mission as a yearlong effort that includes school residencies, student matinees, teacher development programs and, of course, summer camps. "We'd like to deepen our work in schools," says the director, "invite in more diverse teaching artists, and Clive will be excellent at training a new cadre of teaching artists coming from diverse backgrounds."

Worsley is passionate about art education. "So many programs are being slashed," he says, "and there is so much that can be done." And he has seen how an artist in classroom residency can help teachers develop art curriculum.

"Theater can be used for writing, movement, storytelling, and enlivening historic topics," he says. "During a residency in Orinda Intermediate School, we put on a classroom presentation of 'Henry the Eighth,'" remembers Worsley. "The students were studying medieval history, and the play brought history to life." Cal Shakes works in schools throughout Contra Costa, Alameda and San Francisco counties.

Cal Shakes is funded by individual donors, associations, corporations and government. In his new position, Worsley will also participate in the fundraising efforts of the non-profit. "Clive will be the primary advocate for our work in education," says Moscone. "His position is a top leadership role of a core program. He is the right person for the job; he has all the right tools. The entire board is very enthusiastic with his hiring."

Town Hall Theatre has not yet named a replacement.

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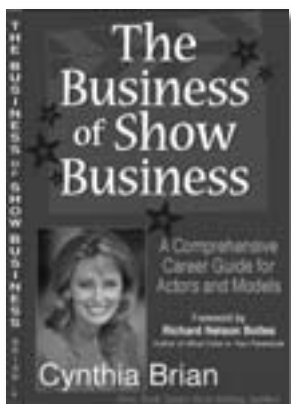
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