Diamonds, Rust and a Deep Songbook

Joan Baez: activist, folk legend, Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame Nominee returns to Santa Barbara
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MUSIC
5  Joan Baez, folk legend returns to town for show at Arlington
6  Los Angeles Jazz Quartet group plays pieces written by Pat Metheny
8  Sounds of the Scene

ON STAGE
7  "Lizzie" Out Of The Box productions is back with a rock opera

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31  Montecito Coffee Shop friendly service and big portions

Sabrina Carpenter
All of 17 years old now, singer-songwriter-actress Sabrina Carpenter is living up to the title of the TV series she appears in, "Girl Meets World," being the world of Disney, and beyond. After releasing her debut album "Eyes Wide Open" last year, she has unveiled her more mature second album, "EVOlution," accompanied by her very first headlining tour, which brings her to the Lobero Theatre on Saturday. She has channeled up millions of views for videos of her songs "Can't Blame a Girl for Trying," "We'll Be the Stars" and "Smoke and Fire," and the first single, "On Purpose," from her new album, is poised to push her ever deeper and wider into the greater world, post-Disney and post-adolescence. Saturday, 7 p.m., Lobero Theatre, 33 E. Canon Perdido. Tickets: $20-$25. Info: 969-6761, www.lobero.com. — Josef Woodard

Sergio Mendes
Popular Brazilian legend Sergio Mendes may be naturally linked to a particular number and year — thanks to his band Brasil '66, and the year when he zoomed into mass consciousness. His milestone album "Herb Alpert Presents Sergio Mendes and Brasil '66," now part of the Grammy Hall of Fame, supercharged a career that saw many radio hits and a long-haul career that keeps going strong, 50 years later. Catch the '66 in 2016. Thursday, 8 p.m., Chumash Casino Resort, 3400 East Highway 246, Santa Ynez. $25-$35. Information: 800-248-6274, chumashcasino.com. — Josef Woodard

Zakir Hussain and Niladri Kumar
Zakir Hussain, one of the greatest living tabla players and an adventurous cultural hybridizer, has played Santa Barbara many times, including in classical Indian Hindustani mode with the late, great Ravi Shankar, and in Santa Barbara-based jazz legend Charles Lloyd's Sangam Trio. For his first local appearance in several years, Mr. Hussain appears at Campbell Hall with Niladri Kumar, the young Indian sensation on sitar (and his custom electric "zitar"). Both musicians champion their Hindustani roots while venturing into new contexts, and Tuesday's concert promises to be a highlight of the "world music" calendar. Tuesday at 8 p.m. UCSB Campbell Hall, $25-$35 general, $10 UCSB students. Information: 893-3535, www.artssandlectures.sa.ucsb.edu. — Josef Woodard
Where Folk Meets the Road, and the World

FOLK MUSIC LEGEND JOAN BAEZ, WHO CELEBRATED HER 75TH BIRTHDAY IN GRAND STYLE THIS YEAR, RETURNS TO SANTA BARBARA

By Josef Woodard,
News-Press Correspondent

Joan Baez
When: 8 p.m., Thursday
Where: Arlington Theatre, 1317 State St.
Cost: $50-$75 general, $20 UCSB students
Information: 893-3535, artsandlectures.sa.ucsb.edu

Two years ago, when we last heard Joan Baez in Santa Barbara, the great American folk music legend offered an illuminating slice of her expansive musical life, from songs by her ally and one-time beau Bob Dylan to her hauntingly beautiful and best-known song "Diamonds and Rust" (actually about said Bob). But beyond the music and the presence of an icon, the performance is also remembered for the presence of her dog Ginger, in tow and sitting peacefully onstage, as if hanging out with her owner in the backyard.

On Thursday, Ms. Baez returns to town, in a concert at the Arlington Theatre presented by UCSB Arts & Lectures, as part of a tour promoting awareness of the Innocence Project, a program that works with wrongfully convicted inmates. Social causes have gone hand-in-hand with Ms. Baez's musical path, from marching with Martin Luther King to championing the Dixie Chicks' political stance against the Iraq War, and many points between and beyond.

While she hasn't made a new album in several years (a forthcoming album is presently in-progress), timely talking points in her life include last week's announcement that she is a nominee for the 2017 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame — inductees to be announced in December. In January of this year, she celebrated her 75th birthday with a gala concert at the Beacon Theatre, with a guest list including Paul Simon, Emmylou Harris, Judy Collins, locals Jackson Browne and David Crosby, Damien Rice and many others.

Last week, Ms. Baez was at a tour stop in Madison, Wis., when she took time out to give an interview, in her typically engaging fashion. She spoke openly about aging, Dylan, and, of course, her ongoing concerns about the world, society and political arena in motion. When I reminded Ms. Baez of her dog's crowd-pleasing spotlight at the Bowl show, she October 28, 2016 - November 3, 2016

(laughs). Decades ago, I asked my first vocal coach how I would know to stop singing. He said "your voice will tell you." It's not ill health. It's not a number of other things. It's just that fighting gravity gets to be too difficult after awhile.

NP: With this current tour, one extramusical aspect of it is as an awareness-builder for the issue of wrongful convictions. Can you tell me about your link to that cause?

JB: Yes, it's connected to the Innocence Project. It has been around for awhile. I didn't hook up with this closely until this tour, but I have known about it, the good things people have said about it and the success rate that they have. Looking around the times here in this country, before Trump starting occupying all the news, it really was about black kids getting shot. This deals with color, with racism and racial disparities and mass arrests and "stop and frisk" and torture in prisons.

Once you get reading about it, then you can choose whether it's something you want to get more involved in.

NP: It must be more of a pressing issue than ever before in America.

JB: Right now, yeah. It was before the nominations and the fight started. This ridiculous campaign has been revealing. So much is tilted. If you fall into the racist, bigamist category, etc., then you really do see how much worse it could be. We need now to keep it somehow on a path that keeps it level or from getting worse.

Hopefully, in a political climate similar to the one we have now, we can continue to do this work unimpeded. If the atmosphere really changed, everything would be sliding backwards. It would be difficult to get it moving uphill again.

NP: You have been in the midst of this tour as this latest chapter of the presidential circus has been unfolding, over the last month or so.

JB: That's right, and our last concert is the day before the election.

NP: Just interesting.

JB: Yeah, it is coincidentally.

NP: Or maybe there is some divine input there.

JB: Maybe there was. I get my last punch in, you know?

I was a big Sanders supporter. So all of this is quite a slog for people like myself, who really were so invested in that wonderful guy. We knew something

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Cut to the Bone
OUT OF THE BOX RETURNS WITH ROCK OPERA ‘LIZZIE’

By Ted Mills, News-Press Correspondent

“Lizzie”
When: Thursday-Saturday, 8 p.m.; Sunday, 2 p.m.; Nov. 3-13
Where: Center Stage Theater, Paseo Nuevo
Cost: $28, general; $18 students/seniors
Information: centerstageattheater.org or 963-0408

Lizzie Borden took an axe...and gave her mother forty whacks...When she saw what she had done...she gave her father forty-one.

Or did she? The case of Lizzie Borden, the young woman who was charged with the murders of her parents, was in 1892 the first ever tabloid trial, one that captured the imagination of the American public like nothing before.

Recently it’s also captured the imagination of writers more than a century after the fact, including a Lifetime movie with Christina Ricci, and before that a rock musical, “Lizzie” that makes its Santa Barbara debut Thursday.

No stranger to the macabre and musicals that push the envelope, Out of the Box takes on this four-woman ensemble piece for a show unlike any other they’ve done.

“The soundtrack alone is what got me hoodwinked,” says Out of the Box’s artistic director Samantha Eve. “There’s nothing like it in musical theater. It’s truly an original work.”

That’s due to Steven Cheslik DeMeyer, Alan Stevens Hewitt, and Tim Maner, the team behind the show who took as their inspiration bands like Heart, the Runaways, and Bikini Kill. The songs are anemic and very catchy.

First envisioned as a couple of songs, “Lizzie” has evolved over nearly 20 years, through workshop and numerous productions into the version now being produced.

There are a lot of new faces in the production, with only Sydney Wesson (playing the Borden’s friend Alice Russell) familiar to OOTB’s audiences from starring in “Heathers”). The rest of the cast includes Katie Moya as Lizzie Borden, Samantha Corbett as the Borden’s live-in maid Bridget Sullivan, and Amy Soriano-Palagi as Emma Borden, Lizzie’s sister.

The other reason the musical intrigued Ms. Eve was the all-female cast.

“It’s obvious in Santa Barbara that there’s a ton of talented people here,” she says. “This seemed like a good vehicle to showcase some very strong female singers and performers. It’s also a female-forward story, where you get to know the story of Lizzie Borden from each of their perspectives.”

The musical is also an examination of female roles at the time. Lizzie Borden was from a wealthy family and went to church. She did “everything right” according to the time, so the idea that a woman like her would do something so horrendous was too much for some. Many believed Lizzie Borden was guilty.

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was fishy. We knew things were going on that we couldn’t pick out, that we couldn’t nail down. Then WikiLeaks does nail it down and we had to go through that whole thing of being ticked off at Clinton, and then trying to get back on the rails with her, as everyone in Washington had to.

Bernie had to, and actually did a noble job. I think people criticizing him for that are stupid, because she was the only choice — or otherwise they would sit around pointing that he didn’t get the nomination. I would say that since the last debate, she has become more palatable to me. She might have relaxed somehow, or gone through more training than we can imagine, but I find I can more easily get to the polls now.

NP: Given the deep tradition of your music and activism and awareness of social and political conditions at any given time, this seems to just be in your DNA. Have there been times when you have wanted to escape the realities of the socio-political world and take refuge in music for its own sake?
JB: No. There were times when I pulled back. When I’m not pressing or in my face, I’m very likely to be painting, or spending time at home, spending time with the family, things that I didn’t do in the years when I was so physically involved and going everywhere. Now, you can’t escape it without saying something, which I’m happy to do. I’ve probably said before that I’m happiest when I’m worrying and active at the same time. It gives me my reason for being and makes it much stronger.
NP: I have to join the chorus of people bugging you on the subject of Bob Dylan: now your song “Diamonds and Rust” is about a Nobel Prize winner. How about that?
JB: (Laughs) It hasn’t been put that way before. I’m proud to be in that niche, part of that ten-year period when there was this excessive amount of talent and activity, which also went political and into activism and so on. Those of us who came out of that...it was kind of a 10-year explosion of talent, and then the Brits came. And amongst all of us, Bob was special with his writing. Nobody ever came close. NP: Did the Nobel announcement surprise you, in the sense that songwriters aren’t traditionally in the running for “literature.” Most people are praising the choice, but some have complained about it...
JB: You mean because of semantics and technicalities, or do you mean they don’t think he earned it?
NP: The fact that he is a songwriter, and outside the standard definition of what constitutes literature.
JB: Well, I’ve never been interested in standard definitions of anything. No, I think it’s wonderful. I do more in this style, too. We call it “Bob Dylan appreciation month.”
NP: You have just rounded the corner to 75 this year and had a big birthday bash at the Beacon Theatre, attended by a stunning array of guests. That must have been a special evening for you.
JB: It was. It was something that, number one, I had to accept, which is partly why I said “yes” to my manager. He secured the evening and said, “Would you like to connect it with your birthday?” I thought for about an eighth of a second, and I said “yeah.” It’s time to start dealing with it.” “75” doesn’t sound scary anymore.
I’ve started saying “80”, so it won’t be so terrifying and awful (laughs). I just say it periodically, to remind myself that it’s on its way, and be grateful for my health and for my approach to death and dying, if I can do it as well as I think I have a lot of my life.
NP: There are so many artists around your general age now who are going strong, creating and performing at a high level, including Dylan. So maybe it’s younger than you used to be.
JB: I think that’s true. I was so much older then, I’m younger than that now.

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