

LA STAGE

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LASA NEWS

BY TRENA PITCHFORD

PLUNGING INTO THE UNKNOWN

Despite many closures of 99 seat venues in Hollywood, there is a flower growing amongst the weeds. By combining high-quality theatrical productions with performance, poetry, music, modern dance and comedy, Unknown Theater aims to make the celebration of the human spirit the centerpiece of Los Angeles nightlife. Set in the middle of Hollywood on Seward Street, this new venue and company are determined to set a different standard for the hundreds of 99 seat venues that decorate our community.

Artistic Director and General Manager Chris Covics explains, "We began in 2002 with 11 board members and a dream." The dream became to unite the actors and the audience, celebrating the essence of community, a shared experience, and to break down the barriers between the theatre itself and other forms of contemporary entertainment making art and education a regular part of people's lives. With their first production in their new space under their belts (*Johnson Over Jordan*, Oct.-Nov. 2005), Unknown's business plan is quite impressive. Their *Creation Plan* called for broad, multifaceted fundraising efforts to secure their programming: *The Main Event*, consisting of a season of four plays with dance productions in between; *The Unknown Play* project, a

JANET COLLARD, QUILET RARANG AND MONICA FAVAND IN *BENEATH THE WATER*

RON BARTLETT

playwriting development project; *Unknown Classics*, a commitment to producing classical texts through a fresh understanding; *The 5th Wall*, a nightly post-show celebration of music, dance, comedy, poetry and performance; and their Outreach Programs including creating original plays for schoolchildren, educational programs for homeless youth, a summer training program for students 8-13 yrs old and a volunteer program to offer learning opportunities to the general public.

Truly a collaboration of many art forms, Unknown's busting-at-the-seams business plan has caught the attention of such donors as Bryan Singer (*X-Men*, *Usual Suspects*), Janet Jackson's JDJ Productions and a healthy list of community businesses, friends and family. Three years of prep work to get the right venue, the right funding and the right plan are showing their true colors as their first season takes shape. Covics explains, "All of this effort has already put us on a path to a bright future. Over the next decade you will see all of our ambitious dreams come to fruition as we build an important Los Angeles artistic institution. Our goal with this design has been to create a theatre that people can't wait to come back to, where good times and challenging art can live together."

Up next? Trip Dance Theatre's *Breath and Bone*, an evening of dynamic, emotionally charged contemporary dance, video and live original music. Featuring choreography from Artistic Director Monica Favand, this contemporary modern dance piece explores lost and found connections with memories, voices and primal instincts that live within our breath and bones. And after the show? Stick around for the free 5th Wall entertainment. Next at the Unknown will be *Scenes From an Execution* by Howard Barker, opening Feb. 9.

BREATH AND BONE

Opens Jan. 6; plays Fri.-Sat., 8 pm;

Sun., 7 pm; ends Jan. 15

Tickets: \$18

Unknown Theater

1110 Seward St., Los Angeles

323.466.7781 or www.UnknownTheater.com