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Idiot String presents 'Port Stories,' interactive theater adventure in Port Costa

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"Port Stories," an interactive adventure explores the town of Port Costa with weekend performances running through June 23.

OAKLAND — Idiot String presents its site-specific theatrical production “Port Stories” on June 7–23, Saturdays at 1 and 5 p.m., and Sundays at 5 p.m. in connection with their residency at the Port Costa Schoolhouse.

“Port Stories” is an interactive adventure exploring the town of Port Costa, migration to and from California, and the meaning of home. Audiences begin their journey at the Port Costa Schoolhouse, at 1 Plaza del Hambre, Port Costa and follow the show to locations throughout downtown Port Costa.

“Port Stories” is devised collaboratively with the ensemble, directed by Rebecca Longworth, with dramaturgy by Soren Santos and production design by Joan Howard.

The events of “Port Stories” begin the day following a nighttime earthquake. Odd things happen after earthquakes, after all. Some say that cracks in time open up, just like the cracks in the earth. Folks can slip through the fissures, especially if they’re on their way to somewhere else.

Though fictional, “Port Stories” is inspired by the history of Port Costa and nearby communities, and themes include migration, acts of nature, the physical landscape of the Carquinez Strait and its surrounding hills, as well as the ways stories are kept, told, and passed down in families and communities.

Like all of Idiot String's productions, "Port Stories" will engage the audience with clear and friendly invitations to interact with the actors and action of the show. Some scenes are performed for only a portion of the audience, so each attendee has different experience of the show.

"Port Costa is a remarkable and quirky community," said Howard, a co-producer. "It is a town with such a rich heritage and a population of only 200, but it's just 20 minutes from Berkeley. It is also a very artistic community, and we are so honored to join the many local artists such as Clayton Bailey and Wendy Addison who are actively creating in Port Costa.

"For 'Port Stories,' downtown merchants have come to our aid in heroic capacities, lending spaces to rehearse and perform including the Burlington Hotel, Bull Valley Roadhouse, Port Costa Mercantile, and Wendy Addison's Theatre of Dreams. We planned showtimes so that attendees could grab coffee at the Honey House Cafe, enjoy brunch or dinner at the Bull Valley, or explore downtown before or after the show. Our vision for 'Port Stories' is that it's not just a show; it is a shimmering doorway to all that is Port Costa, past and present."

"Port Stories" is also part of the burgeoning movement toward environmental, interactive and immersive theater taking place around the country and the world. These productions include varying degrees of interaction between actors and audience.

This production is wheelchair-accessible; notify the box office when ordering tickets in advance to arrange accommodations for those with mobility needs or other accessibility concerns.

This production of “Port Stories” is made possible by Idiot Strings’ sponsors and funders, including East Bay Fund for Artists at the East Bay Community Foundation, Crockett Community Foundation, Edward J. Daly Foundation, Port Costa Conservation Society, Independent Arts and Media, the Burlington Hotel and the Bull Valley Roadhouse.

After the performance, audiences can explore the whimsical town of Port Costa: dine at the Bull Valley Roadhouse (one of the San Francisco Chronicle’s top 100 Bay Area restaurants), go on a scenic bicycle ride or hike, shop for antiques and artworks, or enjoy a libation at The Warehouse, a legendary bar boasting a huge beer list, a stuffed polar bear and a stuffed grizzly bear.

Tickets range from \$15-\$40 and may be purchased at idiotstring.org. Ticket sales begin May 1. Residents of Port Costa, Crockett and Tormey are eligible for special \$5 tickets that can be reserved online or purchased in person at the door. More information can be found at idiotstring.org, via phone at 510-542-9009 or by emailing idiotstring@gmail.com.

The performance is sponsored by the Port Costa Conservation Society.