

**NEIGHBORHOOD STORIES**  
THE MOST LOCAL OF ALL THEATER COMPANIES

1 May, 2021

Dear Neighbor,

We are excited to announce that **NEIGHBORHOOD STORIES** is coming to El Cerrito on May 15, 2021.

**WHAT IS NEIGHBORHOOD STORIES?**

Neighborhood Stories is an array of short, live performances that unfold all across a given city or neighborhood—created by a cast of artists who live in that neighborhood—to evoke the lives of that neighborhood. Each episode is different, highlighting a different city and different performers. Part treasure hunt, part city tour, all entertaining, Neighborhood Stories is the most local of all theater companies.

In good times and bad, people thrive best when they feel deep connections to their communities. Neighborhood Stories takes audiences of all ages on mini magical mystery tours that draw new attention to places they see every day, and introduce them to paths they may never have seen before, exploring the landscapes, cultures, and daily life of our very local communities. Sometimes historical, sometimes deeply personal, Neighborhood Stories events are love letters to the cities around us that create a deep sense of home and foster new understanding about the places where we live and the people who share those spaces with us.

**EPISODE 3: EL CERRITO** highlights the unique artistry of El Cerrito by exploring El Cerrito and Richmond's fascinating history and vibrant artistic communities. Audiences will be in good hands with our performers, who range from well-known to newly discovered.

Sliding scale-priced **tickets** are available through EventBrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/neighborhood-storiesepisode-3-el-cerrito-tickets-152813444125>

Professional photos of the Episode 3 artists and production photos from *Episode 1: Oakland* and *Episode 2: Mill Valley* are both available upon request.

Sincerely,



Erin Merritt  
Producer

**WE ARE ALL NEIGHBORS. LET'S GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER.**

● neighborhood-stories.com ➡ 415.902.4814 ➡ info@neighborhood-stories.com ●

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 15 – May 30, 2021

MEDIA CONTACT: Erin Merritt

MEDIA PHONE: (415) 902-4814

Erin Merritt

presents:

LOCAL, LIVE... AND SAFE!

# NEIGHBORHOOD STORIES

## (EPISODE 3: EL CERRITO)

WATCH FROM THE SAFETY OF YOUR CAR

*Do you miss community and live performance? So do we.*

*Are you ready for a really big adventure? We have one for you.*

Neighborhood Stories is a *new, episodic theatrical event* that allows artists and audiences to share the joy of live performance in complete safety during the pandemic.

### WHAT?

Pack your quarantine posse in a car and join us for an afternoon of short, live performances that unfold into one satisfyingly curated event showcasing a wide range of performance styles by a ethnically diverse cast of professional actors, dancers, musicians, and more—all El Cerrito and Richmond residents.

Bring your sense of wonder, and we'll send you on a GPS-guided magical mystery tour that will make you fall in love with El Cerrito's rich artistic life. We are all neighbors. Let's get to know each other!

### WHERE?

Mystery locations in El Cerrito, revealed one at a time...

### WHEN?

SATURDAY & SUNDAY AFTERNOONS

May 15 – May 30

Choose your start time between 2 and 3:45

The show runs just under 2 hours and is appropriate for all ages

### HOW MUCH?

\$50 - \$25 per car.

*Tickets extremely limited: only 6 dates/only 24 cars per date*

Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/neighborhood-storiesepisode-3-el-cerrito-tickets-152813444125>

### MORE INFO?

[neighborhood-stories.com](http://neighborhood-stories.com) or (415) 683-6651 (Public)/(415) 902-4814 (Press)

WE ARE ALL NEIGHBORS. LET'S GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER.

## PSAS

*:60 Do you miss live performances? So do we.  
Are you craving adventure but still want to stay safe? We've got you covered.*

Created by a spectacular array of local actors, musicians, storytellers and more, Neighborhood Stories presents an afternoon of short, family-friendly, live performances that unfold all across El Cerrito, for audiences to watch from the safety of their cars.

Part treasure hunt, part city tour, all entertaining, Neighborhood Stories is the antidote to the pandemic blues and a great way to reconnect to family, friends, and outdoor life. Tickets are priced per-car so you can afford to bring your whole family, so come fall in love with El Cerrito and the performing arts again.

Neighborhood Stories will hold 6 performances only—Saturday and Sunday May 15 – 30—for only 24 cars per day, so don't miss out. Visit [neighborhood-stories.com](http://neighborhood-stories.com)—that's [neighborhood-hyphen-stories.com](http://neighborhood-hyphen-stories.com)—for tickets now. Welcome back, neighbor! We can't wait to see you again!

*:45 Do you miss live performances? So do we.  
Are you ready for a really big adventure? We have one for you.*

Pack your quarantine posse in a car and join Neighborhood Stories for an afternoon of short, family-friendly, live performances that unfold all across El Cerrito—created by local actors, musicians, storytellers and more—for you to watch from the safety of your car.

Part treasure hunt, part city tour, all entertaining, Neighborhood Stories is the antidote to the pandemic blues and a great way to reconnect to family, friends, and outdoor life. Visit [neighborhood-stories.com](http://neighborhood-stories.com). That's [neighborhood-hyphen-stories.com](http://neighborhood-hyphen-stories.com), for tickets now.

*:30 Missing live shows?*

New company Neighborhood Stories performs live while you watch from the safety of your car!

For 6 performances only—Saturday and Sunday May 15 – 30—local actors, musicians, storytellers and more present an afternoon of short, family-friendly, live performances that unfold all across El Cerrito.

Visit [neighborhood-stories.com](http://neighborhood-stories.com). That's [neighborhood-hyphen-stories.com](http://neighborhood-hyphen-stories.com), for tickets now.

## EPISODE 3: ARTISTS (More To Be Announced Soon)

**AKAINA GHOSH** (Actor) (they/them): is the Artistic Director of Liar Liar Theater Collective, a womxn led theater company that debuts original immersive and site-specific work. They trained with One Year Lease and New York Stage and Film while attending New York's Vassar College, where they received a BA in Drama as well as a BA in Philosophy. Akaina's specialties include music composition, devised theater, and ensemble performance. Akaina has worked across the United States and around the globe, debuting works in New York, Los Angeles, Switzerland, Greece, and the San Francisco Bay Area. Akaina has been a Core Member of Ragged Wing Ensemble and a Resident Artist with SF Shakespeare Festival. Recent performances include God in *Feel the Spirit* (Shotgun Players), Silvius in *As You Like It* (SF Shakes), and Tilly (TBA Award Nomination) in *Time Sensitive* (Ragged Wing Ensemble). Akaina is passionate about reconstructing historically significant narratives through a gender expansive lens and generating new works that center queer voices and perspectives. <http://www.akainaghosh.com/>

**ANNE YUMI KOBORI** (Playwright) is a Japanese-American multi-disciplinary theatre artist. She believes in live theatre as a unique and powerful form of human connection. Anne has performed with Berkeley REP Ground Floor, SF Shakespeare Festival, Silicon Valley Shakespeare (formerly Shady Shakespeare), Arabian Shakespeare Festival, PlayGround, Amios ShotzSF, Contra Costa Civic Theatre, Woman's Will, Bay Area Children's Theatre, Palo Alto Players, Stagebridge Theatre Co., Cardboard Box Theatre Project, and with college companies in New York and the Bay Area. In 2014 Anne founded Utopia Theatre Project in order to support emerging artists and produce theatre which inspires social change and actor-audience connection. She graduated *summa cum laude* from Santa Clara University with a BA in Theatre Arts. <http://www.annenyumikobori.com/>

**AARON LOEB** (Playwright)'s work has been performed around the world. His full-length plays include *Ideation* (which premiered Off Broadway in 2016), *The Trials of Sam Houston*, *The Proud, Brown, First Person Shooter*, *Blastosphere* (with Geetha Reddy), and *Abraham Lincoln's Big, Gay Dance Party* (Off-Broadway premiere in 2010). Loeb received the Will Glickman award for Best New Play in the Bay Area for *Ideation* in 2013. He is the resident playwright of San Francisco Playhouse and a member of the Dramatists Guild, Inc. His published work can be purchased through [Playscripts](#).

**CHERI MILLER** (Actor) is a Detroit-born, Bay Area-based performer and El Cerrito resident. A tireless advocate of theater arts and social justice, Cheri Miller received her first acting and stage lessons under the guidance and tutelage of the celebrated actor, director and playwright, the late Mrs. Mary L. Booker, training twice a week within workshops Mrs. Booker taught in Bayview, and remains deeply involved with Bayview Opera House and the San Francisco African American Cultural District. She made her stage debut during the Bayview Opera's House Juneteenth celebration on the ACT Stagecoach in 2015. Cheri has continued working within the family of ACT, with a performance in the production of *Crack. Rumble. Fly. The Bayview Stories Project*, and *Every 28 Hours* in collaboration with Crowded Fire Theatre, The Lorraine Hansberry Theatre, Campo Santos and FaultLine Theater. Since then she has begun directing with Berkeley's TheatreFIRST and producing with the Bay Area Women's Theatre Festival, where she is a Lead Instigator of the Amplify! 24-Hour Festival and originated and ran the Amplify podcast series featuring female-identified performing artists, with a particular focus on Black artists. She combines her love of theatre with activism, because she knows that theatre can heal. Art is her activism.

**EVELYN MITCHELL** (Poet): Evelyn Janean Mitchell is cultured, creative and charismatic with the way she travels the roads of life's journey. She was born and raised in El Cerrito, and courageous enough to move to the Chicagoland area by herself. She lived in the artistry of its culture for 20 years, exploring the lessons, long hours and benefits of entrepreneurial life. The diversity of the Bay Area cultivated her respect for others and allowed her to experience the beauty in everyone's differences. Professionally, Mrs. Mitchell's passions for cosmetology and poetry have allowed her to travel the world sharing and teaching her crafts. From California to Nairobi, Kenya and many places in between, healthy hair and spoken word are affectionately intertwined being a catalyst for her to express her love of people and community. [El Cerrito Poet Laureate Bio](#)

**PLONSEY MUSIC** (Band) is a local legend, a family band like no other, melding deep classical and jazz training with improvisation in ways that are both sublime and silly.

**DAN PLONSEY** (Composer/Saxophonist) was born in Cleveland, Ohio, but has lived in California for 24 years, and in El Cerrito for 14. Since 1978, Plonsey has written hundreds of works for large and small ensembles. He has received commissions from: The Jewish Music Festival (Berkeley), Dandelion DanceTheater (Oakland), Real Time Operai (New Hampshire), the Bang on a Can People's Commissioning Fund (New York), Theatre of Yugen (San Francisco), the Museum of Children's Art (Oakland), Milkbar International Film Festival (Oakland), the Berkeley Symphony Children's Concert Series, and New Music Works (Santa Cruz). Most of Plonsey's work has been written without commission, deadline, or any significant outside influence for Daniel Popsicle, his 10-20 person ensemble of unfixed instrumentation.

Brooklyn-born **MANTRA PLONSEY** (Vocalist) is an Intuition Engineer at EnChroma, and Artistic Director and Writer at Sugarglass Consort performance lab. She writes: "I write plays. I write music. I sing. I teach. I direct. I play around with swords and such. I make movies. When I'm lucky, i meet up with new people and get inspired to do more and new of it all – perform, choreograph, move, evolve as a collaborator (with hope)." She has appeared in many productions by director George Coates, most recently in Twit Wit Radio on KPFA. She has also appeared in films by Les Blank and Rob Nilsson. Mantra has appeared with Kitka, the Enormous Ensemble, and has led several bands of her own.

[danplonsey.com](http://danplonsey.com)

**ALICIA MARY RETES** (Storyteller), part Mayo, Yaqui and Cherokee, is a multitalented interpretive artisan, nature guide and musician. Her work is influenced by personal wildlife adventures combined with respect and appreciation for Native cultural art. She is a Certified Interpretive Guide and Trainer through the National Association for Interpreters. Alicia's mission is to inspire people of all ages to experience meaningful, nurturing relationships with nature through the joy of discovery and interactive experiences guiding to greater respect for all life.

**NEIGHBORHOOD STORIES** is brought to you by **ERIN MERRITT** (Producer/Director), an award-winning director, producer, writer/adaptor and dramaturg who came to prominence as the founder of the Bay Area's all-female Shakespeare company, Woman's Will (1998 – 2011). Woman's Will was a multiethnic, touring company that operated on a strict mission of triple accessibility: every program was designed so that the broadest range of people could reach, afford, and relate to each event, ie the event would both feel relevant to them and be performed by a cast that represented the full diversity of the Bay Area. In 12 seasons there, Ms. Merritt directed 13 productions, including two "Top Ten Shows of the

Year” —Brecht/Weill’s *Happy End* (2005) and Shakespeare’s *Pericles* (2002), which featured a deaf narrator and the world’s first ASL translation of the play; and site specific productions of *Importance of Being Earnest* and *Lord of the Flies*.

In 2009, she left Woman’s Will to begin a freelance career, working variously as producer, director, dramaturg, adaptor, and teacher/lecturer. Producing work includes a film for and about chimps for Primate Cinema in LA; the 2013 and 2014 Bay Area Playwrights Festivals; and the Bay Area Women’s Theatre Festival’s Amplify! a 24-hour festival of over 200 women, non-binary, and trans performers appearing on three stages plus interstitial spaces that was scheduled to appear at Brava! for Women in the Arts on April 18 – 19, 2020 and which she with her team nimbly turned into a 3 hour online event and a series of podcasts. She is also the annual producer/director of the regional Theatre Bay Area Awards and spent two years working on *FSM*, a world premiere musical by SF Mime Troupe writer Joan Holden and composers Bruce Barthol and Daniel Savio that she produced and directed with Stagebridge at Berkeley Rep to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Free Speech Movement.

As a director, recent work includes the world premiere of Susan-Jane Harrison’s *Hunting Love* at Flight Deck; West Coast premiere of Aditi Brennan Kapil’s award-winning *Brahman/i: A One-Hijra Stand-Up Comedy Show* (Crowded Fire); and *Click Clack Moo* and *Cat in the Hat* for Bay Area Children’s Theatre. She has also garnered rave reviews for her translations and adaptations, including Brecht’s *Good Person of Szechuan* and *Drums in the Night*; an expressionist *hamlet: the melancholy dame*; a 5-person *Witches’ Macbeth*; and Philip Pullman’s *Spring-Heeled Jack*, which Mr. Pullman branded “really terrific.”

Her most recently completed work is a project for the National Park Service’s Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front National Historic Park in Richmond CA, writing and directing voice-over scripts that give the mannequins already on site a chance to speak stories based on real lived experiences of Area residents affected by the WWII population boom that came with that wartime work, with a focus on how diverse populations learned to live together in newly unsegregated neighborhoods. Raised in the East Bay, the daughter of a teacher and a historical preservationist, she is deeply invested in disseminating the stories of the Bay Area, past and present, and connecting residents to their home and each other. You can learn more about her at [erinmerritt.com](http://erinmerritt.com)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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