



## ENTERTAINMENT &amp; ARTS

# The art of Xin Liu, a new 'Company,' musical laughs with Tim Minchin and the best art and culture in L.A. this week



An image from Xin Liu's digital video "The White Stone," part of the Benton Museum of Art's exhibition "Open Sky." (Courtesy of Xin Liu and the Benton Museum of Art at Pomona College)

**By Jessica Gelt**  
Staff Writer

Aug. 8, 2024 3 AM PT

Greetings and welcome to another edition of the Essential Arts newsletter, a place where we may not care THAT much about the Olympics but we still bring you gold when it comes to the best theater, fine art, music and other local culture around L.A. Here's a look at what this week has in store.

## Best bets: What's on our radar this week

### 1. “Open Sky” and “Roy Thurston: Recent Work”

Building on the Benton Museum's installation of the only public James Turrell Skyspace in Southern California, the new exhibition “Open Sky” showcases the work of Light and Space artists Xin Liu, Agnieszka Polska, Marcus Zúñiga and the duo of Malik Gaines and Alexandro Segade. Their opening coincides with a second show featuring new sculptural work from Thurston, including a 10-foot-tall installation, that challenges the viewer's perceptions of light, color and texture.

*Through Jan. 5. Benton Museum of Art at Pomona College, 120 W. Bonita Ave., Claremont. (909) 621-8283. [pomona.edu/museum](https://pomona.edu/museum)*



Marcus Zúñiga's “emplacement,” 2023, consisting of light, lens, prism and mirror, is part of the “Open Sky” exhibition at the Benton Museum of Art. (Courtesy of the artist)

## 2. “An Unfunny\* Evening With Tim Minchin and His Piano”

Leave it to Minchin to present his concert with an asterisk and a disclaimer: “This is not a comedy gig, although there are no guarantees about the absence of amusement.” After a string of sold-out shows in the U.K. and Australia, the performer is on a 13-city North American tour — the first time he is performing solo in the States after more than a decade away — and in Los Angeles for one night only. Throughout the two-hour show, Minchin will perform songs from his 2020 studio album “Apart Together,” his musicals “Matilda” and “Groundhog Day,” and his TV and film writing, as well as some tunes from his early songwriting days.

7 p.m. Saturday. Orpheum Theatre, 842 S. Broadway, Los Angeles. [timminchin.com](http://timminchin.com)

— Ashley Lee

## 3. Sara Bareilles

The singer-songwriter and Broadway star takes to L.A.’s favorite summer stage, performing career highlights with Thomas Wilkins and the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra. Bareilles’ “Girls5eva” castmate (and “Hamilton” star) Renée Elise Goldsberry opens the night with Broadway, jazz and gospel songs.

8 p.m. Saturday. Hollywood Bowl, 2301 N. Highland Ave., L.A. [hollywoodbowl.com](http://hollywoodbowl.com)

## 4. “The Motherboard Suite”

You can be sure of one thing when the choreographer and theater-maker Bill T. Jones takes on any project: It won’t be like anything you’ve seen before. It will have big ideas you may fail to grasp fully. And the dance will be great. “The Motherboard Suite” at the Ford theater on Friday is Jones’ collaboration with slam poet and musician Saul Williams, who, while walking on an African beach, saw discarded motherboards and had an Afrofuturist vision. That vision, in a show conceptualized and directed by Jones, matches Williams with extravagantly costumed dancer-choreographers and multi-instrument musicians.

8 p.m. Friday. The Ford, 2580 Cahuenga Blvd., L.A. [theford.com](http://theford.com)

— Mark Swed

# The week head: A curated calendar

## THURSDAY

**Rachmaninoff and the Tsar** Hershey Felder stars in the world premiere of a musical play that dramatizes pianist-composer Sergei V. Rachmaninoff's encounter with Russian Czar Nicholas II and Grand Duchess Anastasia.

*Through Aug. 25. Broad Stage, 1310 11th St., Santa Monica. [rachandthetsar.com](http://rachandthetsar.com)*

## FRIDAY

**If I Needed Someone** Playwright Neil LaBute's new comedy focuses on contemporary gender politics.

*Preview, 8 p.m. Friday; opening night gala, 8 p.m. Saturday; through Sept. 8. City Garage Theatre, Bergamot Station Arts Center, 2525 Michigan Ave., Santa Monica. [citygarage.org](http://citygarage.org)*

**30th Festival of New Plays** Staged readings of Jennifer Bobiwash's "Never Say Die" and Madeline Easley's "Feast for the Dead" are presented by Native Voices, the Autry Museum of the American West's theater company that produces new works by Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and First Nations playwrights.

*4 p.m. "Never Say Die," 6 p.m. reception, 7 p.m. "Feast for the Dead." The Autry, Griffith Park, 4700 Western Heritage Way, L.A. [theautry.org](http://theautry.org)*

**Summer in the City: Los Angeles, Block by Block** It's a big weekend for Omar Epps fans as the deep-dive series offers Takeshi Kitano's Little Tokyo-set crime film "Brother" (7:30 p.m. Friday) and Gina Prince-Bythewood's 2000 romance "Love & Basketball" (2 p.m. Saturday).

*Series continues through Aug. 31. Academy Museum, 6067 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles. [academymuseum.org](http://academymuseum.org)*

## “Good One”

[India Donaldson](#)’s film, acclaimed at Sundance, centers on a daughter (Lily Collias) and her divorced and remarried father (James Le Gros), who take a Catskills camping trip with Dad’s old friend (Danny McCarthy) — an excursion that will stay with the 17-year-old for the rest of her life.

*Landmark Theatres Sunset, 8000 W. Sunset Blvd., L.A.*

## SATURDAY

**Company at Pantages:** The national tour of the gender-flipped Broadway production makes its L.A. stop with [Britney Coleman](#) as perennial singleton Bobbie who, upon turning 35 years old, contemplates her approach to relationships and collects priceless insights from her closest friends.

*Through Aug. 18. 6233 Hollywood Blvd., Los Angeles. [broadwayinhollywood.com](http://broadwayinhollywood.com)*

## SUNDAY

**Human Error** Eric Pfeffinger’s comedy centers on a blue-state couple who learn that their fertility clinic has accidentally implanted their embryo in a woman at the opposite end of the political spectrum.

*Fridays-Sundays, through Sept. 1. Rogue Machine at the Matrix, 7657 Melrose Ave., L.A. (855) 585-5185, [roguemachinetheatre.org](http://roguemachinetheatre.org)*

**Roll @ Santa Monica** Outdoor roller rink will be open daily, with theme nights on select Wednesdays and group lessons offered for adults and children.

*Through Oct. 14. 1324 5th St., Santa Monica. [rollatsantamonica.com](http://rollatsantamonica.com)*

## TUESDAY

**All-Rachmaninoff** The Los Angeles Philharmonic, with Dima Slobodeniouk as conductor and Alexander Malofeev on piano, performs the composer’s Second

Symphony and “Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini.”

8 p.m. Hollywood Bowl, 2301 N. Highland Ave., L.A. [hollywoodbowl.com](https://hollywoodbowl.com)

**Phung Huynh: Return Home** Closing alert! L.A. artist Huynh’s graphite drawings and photographic banners of Khmer Buddha statue heads looted from Cambodia provoke conversation about the provenance of artifacts in U.S. museum collections.

Through Aug. 17. Luis De Jesus Los Angeles, 1110 Mateo St., L.A. [luisdejesus.com](https://luisdejesus.com)



“Phung Huynh: Return Home” at Luis De Jesus Los Angeles shows graphite drawings and photographic banners of Khmer Buddha statuary from Cambodia to provoke conversation about looted artifacts that remain in U.S. museum collections. (Jorge Grau)

## FRIDAY

**Valley Girl** As part of its series “Summer in the City: Los Angeles, Block by Block,” the Academy Museum hosts director Martha Coolidge for a conversation about her second feature, “Valley Girl,” followed by a screening of the 1980s, very L.A. reimagining of

“Romeo & Juliet” starring Nicolas Cage and Deborah Foreman.

*7:30 p.m. Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, 6067 Wilshire Blvd., L.A.*

[academymuseum.org](https://academymuseum.org)







Singer Sara Bareilles will perform at the Hollywood Bowl. (Wally Skalij / Los Angeles Times)

## AUG. 17

**Sara Bareilles** The singer-songwriter and Broadway star performs career highlights with Thomas Wilkins and the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra. Bareilles' "Girls5eva" castmate (and "Hamilton" favorite) Renée Elise Goldsberry opens the night with Broadway, jazz and gospel songs.

8 p.m. *Hollywood Bowl*, 2301 N. Highland Ave., L.A. [hollywoodbowl.com](http://hollywoodbowl.com)

## AUG. 18

**Lords of Dogtown** American Cinematheque screens the 2005 film about 1970s Venice skate and surf culture. Heath Ledger and Emile Hirsch star. Q&A with director Catherine Hardwicke precedes the screening.

6 p.m. *Egyptian Theatre*, 6712 Hollywood Blvd., L.A. [americancinematheque.com](http://americancinematheque.com)

## L.A.'s biggest culture news



Lin-Manuel Miranda and Eisa Davis, who co-wrote the “Warriors” concept album. (Jimmy Fontaine)

Staff writer **Ashley Lee** [reports](#) that **Lin-Manuel Miranda** and **Eisa Davis** have co-written ‘**Warriors**,’ a concept album inspired by the 1979 cult hit movie “**The Warriors**.”

**The National Children’s Symphony of Venezuela** began a U.S. tour with **Gustavo Dudamel**, proving that young people get along even in times of crisis. Music critic **Mark Swed** tackles the news with some rich, insightful [commentary](#).

In a review of “**Clue: Live on Stage!**,” playing at the **Ahmanson Theatre**, theater critic **Charles McNulty** [writes](#) that the production earns its exclamation point through the breathless exuberance of its physical comedy.



The North American tour of “Company.” (Matthew Murphy for MurphyMade)

In his review of a fresh version of “**Company**,” McNulty [raves](#) that **Marianne Elliott’s** Tony-winning gender-swapped revival of **Stephen Sondheim** and **George Furth’s** classic musical dazzles at the **Hollywood Pantages**.

As she makes her **Broadway** debut, **Amy Sherman-Palladino** [spoke](#) with staffer **Ashley Lee** about reviving the musical fairy tale, rewriting endlessly and being “naive” about theater.



The West End cast of "Stranger Things: The First Shadow." (Manuel Harlan)

**Lee** also [reports](#) that after making its world premiere last year in London's West End, the sci-fi/horror spectacle "**Stranger Things: The First Shadow**," based on the blockbuster **Netflix** series, is coming to New York in 2025.

Finally, **Swed** [reports](#) that opera director **Yuval Sharon**, who broke so much new ground in **Los Angeles** with the **Industry**, will direct a new production of **Wagner's** "**Ring**" cycle in **New York**.

---

Enjoying this newsletter? Consider  
 subscribing to the Los Angeles Times

Your support helps us deliver the news that  
 matters most. [Become a subscriber.](#)

## And last but not least

As far as the Paris Olympics are concerned, 2024 is the year of the Dogg — as in Snoop. How did the Long Beach gangsta rapper become one of the most cuddly, brand-safe ambassadors of all time? Find out here in this [great piece by Greg Braxton](#).



**Jessica Gelt**

Jessica Gelt is an arts and culture writer for the Los Angeles Times.