

## The Big, Fat Fall Arts Preview: 51 Events to Put on Your Calendar

Edited by Annie Tittiger | Photo: As Credited | September 3, 2014

It's not realistic to dedicate your every waking hour to the surplus of cultural happenings this fall. You have other priorities, like eating, working, and Candy Crush. But you might want to set all that aside for a few months. Because these are the days of climactic culture, when every movie has Oscar potential, every TV show has HBO production values, and every book, play, dance performance, and art exhibit has been engineered for maximum critical acclaim. We're talking Breaking Bad's Anna Gunn as a cop in faux-Mendocino, Lena Dunham at the Nourse Theater, tripping with ex-Harvard faculty, tattoo tales, masterpieces made from scraps, and Treasure Island ear candy—and that's just October.



To bring order to the autumnal chaos, we've assigned the following 51 highlights with a "Thrill Rating" of one to three exclamation points. The three-pointers are absolute must-sees; the one-pointers are—well—we understand if back-to-school night gets in the way. We've also slipped in a few wildcards, marked with a "?!" Here's the whole list, arranged chronologically.

1. Author Julia Scott explores the most god-awful work of Dave Eggers, Amy Tan, and Mary Roach in *Drivel: Deliciously Bad Writing by Your Favorite Authors*. Sept. 2 (!)
2. Former investigative reporter Patrick Hoffman sets his debut mystery novel, *The White Van*, in the grimy Tenderloin. Sept. 2 (!)
3. Cal Shakes puts on *Midsummer Night's Dream* for its 40th-anniversary season. Sept. 3–28 (!)
4. Abstract illusionist pioneer James Havard's latest deliberately crude figures parade through the San Francisco Gallery. Sept. 4–27 (!)
5. James Franco has eight flicks slotted for release this season, including *True Story*, *The Sound and the Fury*, and goofball comedy *The Interview*. *The Sound and the Fury* opens Sept. 5 (!!)
6. Stanford's Cantor Arts Center takes a trip to the center of this wild, crazy country of ours with an exhibition of the photos from Robert Frank's postwar book *The Americans*. Sept. 10–Jan. 5, 2015. (!!)

7. A Road Through Shore Pine at the Fraenkel Gallery reminds us of when road trips didn't need a hashtag with the landscape photos of Robert Adams. Sept. 11–Nov. 15. (!!)

8. Mason Bates melds electronic and classical at the S.F. Symphony. Sept. 10–13 (!)

9. If we told you that Louis C.K. was coming to the Shoreline Amphitheatre, you'd be excited. If we told you that Sarah Silverman would be there too, you'd get giddier. If Jim Gaffigan and Aziz Ansari joined the crew, there'd be some dancing. And then if we added Marc Maron and Demetri Martin, your head might explode. Deep breaths. All of them are playing the Oddball Festival, sponsored by Funny or Die. Sept. 12 (!!!)

10. Local Oscar darling Jessica Chastain comes back in full force with many different emotional shades: innocent in Christopher Nolan's *Interstellar*, hormonal in *Miss Julie*, falling in and out of love in *The Disappearance of Eleanor Rigby*, and totes maniacal in *A Most Violent Year*. In theaters Nov. 7, Sept. 12, Sept. 12, and Nov. 18 (!!!)

11. Flyaway Productions's latest project—dancing Spider Man-style off the UC Hastings parking garage—raises awareness about homeless women. Sept. 12–20 (?!)

12. *I'll Give You the Sun*, the second young-adult novel by San Francisco's Jandy Nelson, follows a pair of twins as they grow apart, together, and—eventually—up. It's the Bay Area answer to *The Fault in Our Stars*. Sept. 16 (!!)

13. From the electro-vibe of her new album, *Ices*, you'd think that the once wispy singer-songwriter Lia Ices had moved from Sonoma to New York, not vice versa. Out Sept. 16 (!!)

14. The S.F. Opera's *Susannah* follows the town pariah in rural Tennessee. Sept. 16–21 (?!)

15. The Contemporary Jewish Museum shows off the famous rhinestone-studded Star of David jacket for its commemorative exhibit *Hardly Strictly Warren Hellman*. Ongoing from Sept. 18 (!)

16. The Wiegand Gallery will host *The Roots of the Spirit*, featuring pieces by outsider artists Lonnie Holley, Mr. Imagination, Charlie Lucas, and Kevin Sampson, all of whom were controversially disinvited from the 54th Venice Biennale. Sept. 19–Nov. 26. (?!)

17. After months of easing the minds of Nob Hill NIMBYs, the newly renovated 3,300-seat Masonic music venue, housed in the historic 1958 building, is ready for the masses. The first performance is a show-stopper: Beck! Reopens Sept. 19th (!!)

18. Oakland Museum of California presents *Fertile Ground*, an exploration of four artist cliques: Depression-era muralists (Kahlo, Rivera), very serious School of Fine Arts painters (Rothko, Diebenkorn), freewheeling UC Davis faculty (Wiley, Thiebaud), and yuppie-hating Mission-ites (McGee, Kilgallen). Sept. 20–Apr. 12, 2015 (!!!)

19. Hope Mohr Dance explores its postmodern lineage in *Have We Come a Long Way, Baby?* Sept. 22–27 (!)

20. Katy Perry turns the San Jose SAP Center into Candyland. Sept. 22–23 (!)

21. Brainstorm-heavy Ideation at San Francisco Playhouse makes you put on your thinking cap. Sept. 23–Nov. 8 (!)
22. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, whose newest novel, *Americanah*, won the 2014 National Book Critics Circle Award, chats with Dave Eggers at the Nourse Theater. September 30 (!!)
23. The Museum of the African Diaspora reopens come October. (!)
24. Fox premieres *Gracepoint*, a whodunit drama set in a small coastal town north of San Francisco. Oct. 2 (!!)
25. The Mill Valley Film Festival presents another lineup packed with indie must-sees, including the new documentary *Dying to Know*, in which Sixties icons and ex-Harvard professors Timothy Leary and Ram Dass join at Leary's deathbed to discuss the last great trip. Oct. 2–12 (?!)
26. Banjo strumming abounds at *Hardly Strictly*. Oct. 3–5 (!)
27. Nick Offerman (aka Ron Swanson from *Parks and Recreation*) blows through Santa Rosa, Davis, and Arcata this October to bestow his masculine wisdom on the soft NorCal masses. Oct. 3–6 (!!)
28. Pulitzer Prize winner Jane Smiley's newest novel, *Some Luck*, hits bookshelves. Oct. 7. (!)
29. Prolific local illustrator Wendy McNaughton has another book coming out: *Pen & Ink*, a collaboration with BuzzFeed books editor Isaac Fitzgerald featuring sketches and stories behind 63 tats. Oct. 7 (!!!)
30. Nick Waterhouse tears up the Regency Ballroom. Oct. 9 (!)
31. Litquake celebrates 15 years of literary hobnobbing. Oct. 10–18 (!)
32. The movie *Kill the Messenger*, starring Jeremy Renner, is based on reporter Gary Webb's 20,000-word report for the *San Jose Mercury News* in 1996 alleging that the Reagan-administration's CIA backed the Nicaraguan contras knowing they were being funded by California crack dealing. In theaters Oct. 10 (!!!)
33. NBC's *About a Boy* returns for a second season with sloppy depictions of S.F. still firmly intact. Premieres Oct. 14 (!)
34. Lena Dunham, the star and creator of HBO's *Girls*, promotes her memoir, *Not That Kind of Girl: A Young Woman Tells You What She's "Learned"* at the Nourse Theater. October 16th. (!!!)
35. Jenny McAllister of 13th Floor Dance Theater simplifies James Joyce's surreal doorstep *Finnegans Wake* by choreographing the funeral brigade in "A Wake." Oct. 16 (!!!)
36. *Fragrant: The Secret Life of Scent*, is an authoritatively voiced, utterly fascinating, fact-laden look into the surprisingly complex world of scent. It was written by Mandy Aftel, a Berkeley-based artisan perfumer who has been called "the Alice Waters of perfume." Oct. 16. (?!)

37. Berkeley Repertory turns up the funk with *Party People*, a musical about the Black Panthers. Oct. 17–Nov. 17 (!)
38. Amber Cowan recycled glass sculptures will be on display at *Second-Life Glass* at the Museum of Craft and Design. Oct. 18–Jan. 4, 2015 (!!)
39. Treasure Island Music Festival returns for its seventh year. Acts not to miss include *Jungle*, *Ana Tijoux*, *Chet Faker*, and *Painted Palms*. Oct. 18–19 (!!!)
40. Arnold Newman snapped portraits of all the great cultural influencers of the 20th century, from Marilyn Monroe to Georgia O’Keeffe and many more. Masterclass at the Contemporary Jewish Museum is the first major exhibition of his work since his death in 2006. Oct. 23–Feb. 1, 2015 (!!)
41. Stanford alum turned Brooklyn artist Reed Anderson puts your paper snowflakes to shame at Gallery 16. Oct. 24–Nov. 30 (!)
42. Seana McKenna gets motherly in *Testament* at A.C.T. Oct. 29–Nov. 23 (!)
43. HBO’s *The Newsroom* has its last hurrah November. (!)
44. L. Peter Callender portrays Rober Mugabe, the Zimbabwean dictator in *Breakfast with Mugabe* at the Aurora Theater. Nov. 7–Dec. 7 (!!)
45. *The Political Line* at the De Young explores the daring activism of artist Keith Haring in the 1980’s. Nov. 8–Feb. 16, 2015 (!!!)
46. A behind-the-screen look at *I Love Lucy* lands at the Orpheum Theatre. Nov. 11–23 (!)
47. Crack addiction gets the theater treatment in *Superheroes* at the Cutting Ball Theater. Nov. 14–Dec. 14 (!)
48. Kevin Costner goes Disney as a small-town California track coach in *McFarland*. In theaters. Nov. 21 (!)
49. Reese Witherspoon plays a wilderness-ravaged Cheryl Strayed in the movie adaptation of *Wild*. In theaters. Dec. 5 (!)
50. Come December, the Curran Theatre will be home to *Ghost Brothers of Darkland County*, a dizzyingly creepy operatic play. Stephen King penned the script, John "Cougar" Mellencamp wrote the score, and Burnett—in full Americana guru mode—oversaw it all. Dec. 5 (!!!)
51. Our very own Gary Kamiya joins Kim-Mai Cutler, Chinaka Hodge, and David Talbot to discuss the “State of San Francisco” at the Nourse Dec. 15 (!)

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