

EAST BAY TIMES

Oakland warehouse fire: Chapel of Chimes musical event honors dead

By Laura Casey
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Aric Crabb/staff

Musician Adam Davis gets a hug from a visitor during his performance Sunday at a Chapel of the Chimes event in Oakland honoring victims of the Dec. 2 Ghost Ship warehouse fire. Davis was performing in honor of his friend, Kiyomi Tanouye, who was one of the 36 people who died in the fire.



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Musician Adam Davis performs at an event honoring the victims of the Ghost Ship fire at the Chapel of the Chimes on Sunday, Dec. 18, 2016, in Oakland, Calif. Davis was performing in honor of his friend Kiyomi Tanouye who was one of the 36 people who died in the Ghost Ship fire. (Aric Crabb/Bay Area News Group)



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A photo of Kiyomi Tanouye is displayed at an event honoring the victims of the Ghost Ship fire at the Chapel of the Chimes on Sunday, Dec. 18, 2016, in Oakland, Calif. Tanouye was one of the 36 victims who died in the Ghost Ship fire. (Aric Crabb/Bay Area News Group)



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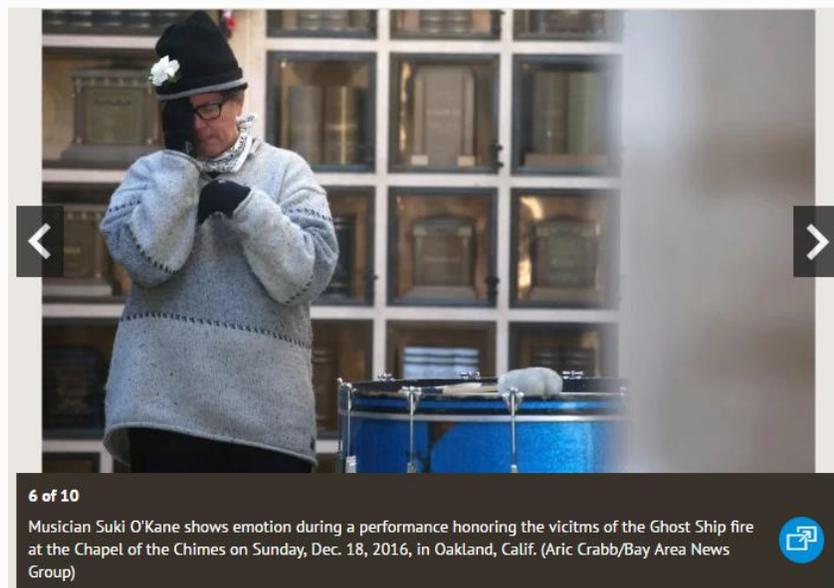


OAKLAND — In a presentation similar to the Chapel of the Chimes' wildly popular annual solstice music event, the columbarium hosted special performances Sunday from more than 30 musicians of several genres in honor of the 36 Oakland Ghost Ship warehouse fire victims.

The event, which also recognized the recently deceased influential experimental composer and musician Pauline Oliveros, was a response to the community's need for a thoughtful place to grieve and reflect, Chapel of the Chimes' General Manager Marcie Russell said.

"We thought this was a way to bring musicians and the community together," Russell said. Chapel of the Chimes also installed a permanent plaque near its doors saying "We Will Never Forget Ghost Ship Fire." More than 200 people gathered at the chapel the day after the Dec. 2 fire to seek answers and mourn, and more attended the Sunday event, which was co-presented by New Music Bay Area.

The program, which ran from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., featured the Temple of Light Georgian Community Choir, Sharmi Basu, the William Winant Percussion Group, the Cardew Choir and others. Many of Sunday's musicians have performed at the Chapel of the Chimes' Garden of Memory solstice events in the past, which can attract more than 3,000 people.



Like the solstice event, people were encouraged to follow their ears through the columbarium's many corridors and floors to find musicians beating drums, playing guitar or keyboards, or singing softly. Several performers made music in different areas of the Julia Morgan-designed space at once, so the experience was one of discovery in the massive building.

Also like the solstice event, this memorial was organized by Sarah Cahill, who said everyone's experience of the day would be individual and personal.

"I think we all have a feeling of loss and need to heal and need to mourn, whether it's for the fire victims or for Pauline or David Bowie or the election or other reasons," she said.

Oakland percussionist Andy Meyerson has participated in five Garden of Memory events and was pleased to be part of Sunday's event, which he said invites curiosity.

"The community aspect of this feels right for all the reasons it's happening right now," Meyerson said. "It's a cathartic thing on so many levels. It's a way of checking in with yourself."

San Francisco composer Danny Clay said the musicians were "making beauty and joy" at a time when many are feeling grief and pain.



“Listening is what we need to be doing to some degree,” he said.

Unlike the annual Garden of Memory event, the crowd was relatively light. Couples walked hand-in-hand through the columbarium and peeked into rooms where pop and electronic musicians were setting up. Some people, overcome with grief, kept their sunglasses on while others wrote messages on white cards that were strung up halfway to the ceiling on red ribbons.



Allan Cronin, of Alameda, came to the event to honor Oliveros, who he had met at music dinner parties, and also seek some peace over the tragedy of the Ghost Ship fire.

“I didn’t know anyone directly there, but it directly affected everyone here, and it was very sad,” he said.



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Musician Dylan Bolles takes part in a performance at an event honoring the victims of the Ghost Ship fire at the Chapel of the Chimes on Sunday, Dec. 18, 2016, in Oakland, Calif. (Aric Crabb/Bay Area News Group)



Angela Little, of Oakland, said that the event was a way for her to connect with music, something that each victim of the fire was doing when they died.

“I love music, and I wanted to be with this community right now,” she said, adding that she’s been to the Garden of Memory event before. “It’s healing to be here among the living and the dead.”



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Musician Edward Schocker takes part in a performance at an event honoring the victims of the Ghost Ship fire at the Chapel of the Chimes on Sunday, Dec. 18, 2016, in Oakland, Calif. (Aric Crabb/Bay Area News Group)



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