

Carpetbag Brigade Brings Acrobatics, Wordless Poetry, and Improvisation to Sleepless Night

By Ily Goyanes Wed., Nov. 2 2011 at 3:00 PM

Reading the biography/history section of the [Carpetbag Brigade's website](#) may cause seizures. The San Francisco group puts on visual extravaganzas using improvisation, acrobatics, music, circus antics, and butoh (explanation below).

This Saturday, the Carpetbag Brigade will perform their live show, "Callings," as part of the much anticipated [Sleepless Night](#), an overnight culturalpalooza taking place on Miami Beach from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. We recently got a chance to talk about silly stuff like ocean teardrops and clouds.



New Times: How did the group come about?

Danbear Davis: Jay Ruby, our director, spent seven years studying physical theater in Europe at Theater Zerbrochene Fenster in Berlin and the Odin Teatret in Denmark.

Isabelle Kirouac: ... And then he moved to Prescott, Arizona and founded the Carpetbag Brigade by initially working with students and fresh alumni of Prescott College.

Could you describe what it is that you guys aim to achieve with your performances?

Helen Goodrum: We aim to make our spectators smile, breathe together, and enjoy life.

Christopher Mankowski: We tell a poetic wordless story with our bodies that induces a trance-like dream state and inspires them with awe.

How would you describe one of your shows?

Ashley Rodd: Our outdoor shows are acrobatic stilt performance using contact improvisation and butoh, accompanied by a musical score.

Jay Ruby: "Callings," our new show, is a poetic response to the issue of climate change. If a sailor survived a siren's song and found out the sea is a living being; Could he count how many of the ocean's teardrops are in each cloud?



What is butoh?

Rodd: Butoh is a form of modern Japanese dance inspired by German expressionism and evolved as a reaction to the dropping of the atomic bomb.

Mankowski: It is a means of transporting the spirit through the body and opening up deep wells of expression.

Isabelle Kirouac: We use it to create deep organic expression and counterbalance the uprightness and rigidity caused by acrobatic technique in our physical expression.

What do you have planned for Sleepless Night in Miami Beach?

Davis: We are going to perform "Callings" at 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. on November 5.

Have any of you ever been to Miami before? Are you guys excited?

Ruby: I was here alone last year conducting an acrostilt performance workshop with Teatro Prometeo for the Book Fair. It is very exciting to return and have all of the Carpetbag Brigade here to perform as well. I am also working again with Teatro Prometeo, who will be presenting "Jaque Mate" at 8:30 p.m. as part of Sleepless Night. It is also an acrobatic stilt performance.

Anything specific you plan to do when you're here besides the performance?

All: Swim with the local sirens, get buried in warm sand, visit an ashtanga class at Miami Life Center, and OCCUPY MIAMI!

The Carpetbag Brigade at Collins Park for Sleepless Night on Saturday, November 5. The event is free. Visit sleeplessnight.org.