

# CULTURE MONSTER

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## 5 DAYS OUT

Highlights of the week ahead in arts, music and performance

### ART

**"Bliss Reunite"**  
Yann Marussich  
Where: Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions  
Hollywood  
When: 7 p.m. Thursday  
Tickets: \$10

### THEATER

**"Elephant Reunion"**  
Where: Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions  
Hollywood  
When: 7 p.m. Thursday  
Tickets: \$10

### MUSIC

**Honor Now: A Postcard of New Music 2010**  
Where: Ford Amphitheatre  
When: 7:30 p.m. Sunday  
Tickets: \$12-\$36

### OPERA

**"The Barber of Seville"**  
Where: Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions  
Hollywood  
When: 7 p.m. Thursday  
Tickets: \$10

### JAZZ

**Artistic Director with**  
Where: Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions  
Hollywood  
When: 7 p.m. Thursday  
Tickets: \$10



DAN VIA and Elise Ramacciotti play father and daughter in "The City" at Son of Semele Theater.

## 'City' suffers urban blight

CHARLES McNULTY  
THEATER CRITIC

Enigmatic anecdote is the currency of Martin Crimp's "The City," having its U.S. premiere at Son of Semele Theater in a production directed by artistic director Matthew McCray. The character actors don't so much engage in dialogue as indulge in a cryptic form of storytelling, in which puzzling incidents are set against a background of warfare, brutality and personal desolation. A foreboding air of menace invokes the work of Harold Pinter, though Crimp's playwright better known in the States for his spry translations of French dramatic classics, is more abstract and diffuse. The one-way talk in "The City" lacks the peculiar comic panache and verbal bite that define "Pinterese." What would Crimp-plan suggest? Something a bit more intellectual — imagine a hall of mirrors, in which narratives reflect and distort one another in a context that seems distant, though nonetheless alarmingly apocalyptic. Marital strain is quickly apparent in the way Clair (Sarah Rosenbergl) and Chris (Dan Via) interact. She's a translator who's fixated on some bizarre occurrence involving a writer who has been tortured and his young daughter Chris is about to lose his corporate job in the globalized downturn. They have two children

### The City

Where: Son of Semele Theater, 3301 Beverly Blvd., L.A.  
When: 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, 5 p.m. Sundays  
(No shows Sept. 7-9)  
Tickets: \$18 to \$20, (213) 551-3507 or www.sonofsemele.org

(only one, played by exqu岸ite Elise Ramacciotti, appears) and little sexual spark. An eerie night-shift theatergoer (Melina Bieff) brings reports of a savage foreign military campaign and requests to Clair that Chris play with the children indoors because the noise disturbs her daytime sleep. The performers don't supplement their shape-shifting roles with much personal color. The characters, living in an age of spiraling war, are bombed out internally, and they are portrayed with deadened neutrality. This adds to the intrigue and the sedium of a drama that has more atmosphere than meaningful action. Nick Benavente's scenic design, arranged like a series of Chinese boxes partitioned in black, sharpens the production's focus. Yet Crimp's blasted urban vision, as bleak as it is elusive, makes it difficult to gain a foothold. charles.mculty@latimes.com

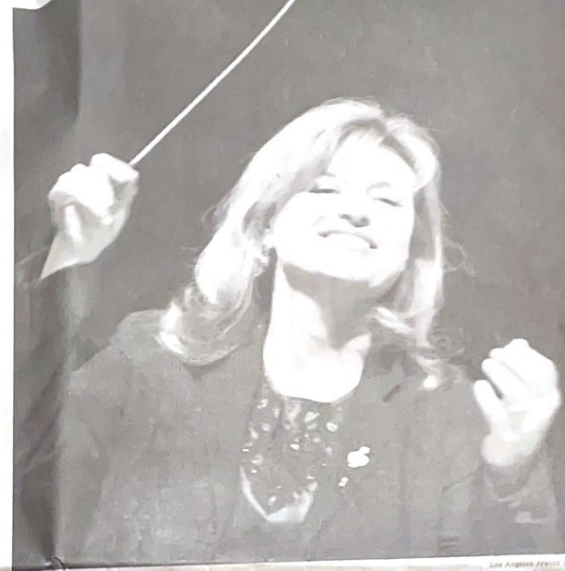
## Surreal visions in a reflective mode

BY DAVID PAOL

The five paintings in Scott Greenwalt's first solo show in Los Angeles take viewers back to the 1960s by way of the mind-blowing trips that acid made possible. But rather than inviting aging boomers to get all misty-eyed about yesteryear, the San Francisco artist's peculiar pictures at Weekend Function (the Oakland location had the initial seven of them) serve they trigger in your brain disintegrates, as you slip past the point of no return into an absurd world unlike any you have ever visited — in body, mind or spirit. All of the signs of Surrealist illustration — melting flesh, ghoulish heads and flashing starbursts — appear in Greenwalt's elaborately detailed images. But the perfunctory, get-the-job-done mechanics of standard-issue Surrealism give way to an eccentric's dyed-in-the-wool devotion to the physical pleasures of painting pictures — mixing colors, dipping brushes, gently stroking

### Scott Greenwalt: Phenomenal Specimens

Where: Weekend, 4634 Hollywood Blvd.  
When: Through Aug. 26, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
www.weekendspace.org, (213) 514-4433  
and slowly building compositions. In a world of instantaneous communication, Greenwalt's version of contemplative Surrealism sticks out like a sore thumb. His anonymous portraits, fractured landscapes and discombobulated still lifes open onto comic wonders that are neither spectacular nor flashy but point-blank and plain-spoken. Their insistence on the disquieting side of tranquility is all the more potent for being home-grown. calendars@latimes.com



NOREEN GREEN founded the new 50-piece orchestra with a commitment to Jewish-related music.

# Here's to life

For its 18th anniversary, the L.A. Jewish Symphony plans a gala at the Ford Amphitheatre celebrating the Jewish experience

BY MIKE BOEHM

### Los Angeles Jewish Symphony

Where: John Anson Ford Amphitheatre, 2580 Cahuenga Blvd.  
When: 7:30 p.m. Sunday  
Tickets: \$12-\$36, (323) 461-3673, fordtheatres.org

The L.A. Jewish Symphony also has taken a unique itinerary through Southern California venues. Though it has often been heard at synagogues, universities and Jewish community centers, it also has performed at Walt Disney Concert Hall in benefit concerts, put on an evening of works by Jewish women composers at UCLA's Royce Hall — and played in the food court of the Westside Pavilion mall. It played Gerashwin to help celebrate the consecration of a new Jewish cemetery in Simi Valley, and accompanied the likes of Marvin Hamlisch, Theodore Bikel and Laine Kazan at the Greek Theatre in televised concerts carried on the Jewish Life cable and satellite TV network. It has had Randy Newman guest-conducting portions of his film score for "Aviva," and Leonard Nimoy as dramatic narrator of Ernst Toch's Passover-inspired "Cantata of the Bitter Herbs." It dives into joyful, whirlingly kinetic music from the klezmer tradition — and on many occasions has mused the gravitas needed for musical remembrances of the Holocaust. The mission is to perform concerts and be a community resource and a storehouse for emerging talents, composers and artists," said Green, who while guiding the Jewish Symphony has also been raising her son and daughter, both 15. Her husband, oncologist and managed care executive Ian Drew, has been another constant as the Jewish Symphony's president. A staff of four part-time employees handles day-to-day business matters, including courting donors to cover much of the orchestra's annual budget of \$250,000 to \$300,000. The ensemble's cornerstones in-

clude concertmaster Mark Kashper and principal cellist Barry Gold, both members of the Los Angeles Philharmonic; principal flautist David Shtout, whose regular group is the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, and principal clarinetist and arranger Zinyov Gorn. They're among the paid professionals who form the core of the Jewish Symphony — with volunteers taking the rest of the chairs, among them professional music teachers who enjoy having a performing outlet. Green doesn't know how many of the players are Jewish — it's not something one asks an audition — but she guesses that Jews make up a great majority of the volunteers and as many as half of the paid professionals. For most of her career, she said, "I think there's a curiosity factor" that draws them to the Jewish repertoire. "Musicians want to be challenged. Everybody around town plays film music, or the same [classical] music. We play different music." The orchestra's audience surveys haven't tried to determine concertgoers' religious or ethnic makeup. Its ongoing education programs, which blend musical and visual art components, are geared toward crossing boundaries, because they are given not only at Jewish day schools but at public schools that include a majority Latino student body. The focus of the 18 years has been to range through a widening repertoire rather than to grow into a bigger enterprise. The Ford Amphitheatre, whose summer program highlights local, state and performance arts diversity, has hosted the Jewish Symphony since 2004. For Saturday's 18-year "CBA Jubilee" concert, Green promises a blend of Sephardic and Ashkenazi traditions and central European Jewish music, the U.S. premiere of "Klezmeropolitan Suite" by Swiss composer Nick Reiser, contributions from the 40-voice Jewish Community Children's Choir, and a liturgical solo from the cantorial repertoire by Nathan Lam, now the cantor of Stephen B. Wise Temple, — and 40 years ago the one who officiated at her bat mitzva. mike.boehm@latimes.com