

## T H E A T E R

# Blue Moon Rising

**Isle of Silk, produced by Arts for Humanity!  
At Center Stage Theater, Friday, September 17.**



*Isle of Silk Cast*

**W**hen things are really rare we sometimes say that they occur “once in a blue moon.” This late summer in Santa Barbara has been blessed with two blue moons – one overhead in the black night sky, and the other within the black box of Center Stage Theater. The Blue Moon Players are a mixed-ability troupe; professionals perform alongside troupe members with developmental disabilities. The *Arts for Humanity!* organization has been producing these integrated shows for seven years, and this year’s magical offering, *Isle of Silk*, is an ensemble piece that transcends the ordinary and stretches the boundaries of our expectations as to what types of performers we see on stage. The director, Karsen Lee Gould, beautifully melds the cast members and the piece successfully emphasizes all of the artists’ various abilities.

The Prelude, “Expect Magic,” introduced color, texture, whimsy, and wonder through music ranging from prerecorded tracks by such artists as Dead Can Dance to cast member Dennis Subica belting out “Somewhere Over the Rainbow.” Next came “The Greeting,” in which the cast was scattered across the stage and throughout the audience, clad in velvet and dancing with Chinese parasols decorated with fireworks of color.

We also saw Maria Arroyo glide through white clouds costumed as a graceful red velvet angel. A white curtain separating two searching lovers foreshadowed the upcoming fairy tale.

The story in *Isle of Silk* centered on the enduring tale of love gained, lost, and rediscovered. UCSB student Alex Knox portrayed the lover Cherubini, sailing with his beloved Koukla (enchantingly played by Jesse Stone) to the mythical Isle of Silk until a storm separates them. The audience seemed to identify with Cherubini, aching with him as he scoured the Isle for Koukla before their heartwarming reunion.

The stunning set included artwork produced by artists with disabilities projected onscreen during the reverie sequence “The Dream.” All the cast members showed off their skills. Dancer Gigi Fullante was lyrically expressive, Rene Correa delivered a delightful operatic solo, and Meghan Finn sang a soulful rendition of “Lay You Down.” *Arts for Humanity!* strives to make the arts accessible by giving voice to disabled performers, and by busying in audiences who otherwise would not have access to theater and dance. *Isle of Silk* accomplished these worthy goals with style, beauty, and magic. It was a visual treat for everyone to share in the ray of last weekend’s blue moon.

Reviewed by Felicia M. Tomasko

## Stage