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Beth Peerless, Where it's at: Moving into summer season



The barbecue is one of the highlights of La Merienda. (Monterey Herald file)

By **BETH PEERLESS** |
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With Memorial Day holiday behind us and what we'd like to think of as the beginning of our summer season off to a somewhat dreary start with last week's late-season rains and unseasonably cool weather, well, it's time things turned around, don't you think? We've got our schedule of annual outdoor events coming around, so Mother Nature had better get it together. Especially considering it's Monterey's annual birthday celebration La Merienda this Saturday.

Celebrating for the 248th year with its legendary Barbecue Buffet Extravaganza and entertainment both traditional and modern, this festive "Californio" party is held in the historic Memory Garden on Custom House Plaza, decorated in old Spanish style and each table decked out by its sponsor. Community luminaries are only too happy to dish out the food when the time comes. Unfortunately, unless you've already gotten in on the action by getting your tickets way ahead of time, you'll have only the faint chance that you can get into the sold-out event with someone else's cancellation. To do that you must give a call to 831-372-2311 and be added to the waiting list. For details visit www.montereyhistory.org.





Award-winning Brazilian ensemble SambaDá will perform Sunday at the Palenke Arts Festival in Laguna Grande Park. (provided)

With a mission to educate and inspire the community through the arts, Palenke Arts in Seaside strives to create a vibrant and inclusive multicultural arts center offering courses and performances in a multitude of art forms. They've been offering low-cost and free music, dance and art classes and concerts to the Seaside community since November 2016 based out of King Elementary school. The organization's Fourth Annual Palenke Arts Festival takes place Sunday at Laguna Grande Park on Canyon del Rey Blvd, across from Seaside City Hall. The free multicultural celebration of the arts features a musical performance by award-winning Brazilian ensemble and crowd favorite SambaDá.

The event takes place from noon until 4 p.m. on the expansive lawn set next to a lake, often with visiting Canadian geese making themselves at home. So be sure to bring blankets and low-cut lawn chairs to stretch out on, plus dancing shoes and community spirit as the music will surely be most inspiring. Also on the bill will be all of the Palenke Arts student ensembles: the Bilingual Youth Chorus, Hip Hop dancers, Jazz Workshop and Tam Tam Sacré West African Drum and Dance. Tacos Don Beto Food Truck will be there, community and artists' booths, live art demos by artist Paul Richmond, a samba dance class, activities for children, including MY Museum's Wheelie Mobilee, face painting, raffles and giveaways.

SambaDá is a Santa Cruz-based band dubbed the West Coast's hottest Brazilian ensemble. The band embraces the rich musical traditions of Brazil with references to salsa and cumbia, blended playfully with funk and reggae beats. Brazilian natives Papiba Godinho and Dandha da Hora bring their profound knowledge and respect for Brazilian music and together with the entire band they present a unique musical sound. Palenke Arts is another one of Monterey's wonderful non-profit arts organizations helping to bring people together and teach young people how to interact with one another with total respect.

Turns out that every summer the two premier shopping centers on the Peninsula have developed a tradition that makes many folks very happy. Weekly free music performances that draw huge crowds to listen and dance to some really great music. Monterey's Del Monte Center gets in on the action first with its "Favorite Fridays" tribute band series rolling out Friday featuring Petty Theft, a Tom Petty tribute band. Each Friday through June 28 there's a different classic rock band represented, taking place from 6-8 p.m. with giveaways and prizes at every concert. The schedule following this week's kick off is: June 7, Caravanserai (Santana); June 14, Kalimba (Earth Wind & Fire); June 21 Forejour (Foreigner and Journey), June 28, Dog 'n' Butterfly (Heart).



At Carmel Plaza, there's a different slant where some of the area's top bands come to play either their original music or do a great variety of cover tunes that inspire dancing. That's what The Money Band is known for. They have become the unofficial ambassadors of this event, serving as the kick off night's entertainment as well as to close at the series finale. Besides the free live music one can buy a ticket for the food, wine and beer packages that are also very popular. Top Carmel restaurants pair with a winery or brewery (or both), different ones each week so people who come regularly can enjoy a variety of food styles and beverages. Those have yet to be named, but the bands are scheduled with the first one taking place June 21, with The Money Band. The event runs from 5-7 p.m. The schedule is: June 28, Chicano All Stars; July 5, Extra Large; July 12, Everyday People; July 19, Beat Street; July 26, Red Beans & Rice; Aug. 2, Joy Bonner Band; and for the finale Aug. 9, The Money Band.

While we're talking lineups here, I recently received an announcement from the Sand City West End Celebration about their music lineup for this year's 18th Annual free event, Aug. 23-25. Each year the very popular street art festival, and so much more, sports a theme. This year it's "Express Your Freedom," emphasizing how many different ways art can express, and even bring about, a sense of freedom. More details about the entire festival as they become available will be on the website at www.westendcelebration.com.

The Friday night Kick Off/Fundraising Concert at Carmel Stone Imports is the only ticketed event (at this writing), and it features The Medflys, one of our area's most successful and notorious rock bands back in the '80s that playfully come back together from time to time for these kinds of special events. Opening the big party that takes place 7-11 p.m., Aug. 23 are veteran Monterey County musicians Roger Eddy, Bruce Forman and John Nava. Tickets go on sale in June for \$25.

Saturday's top billing for the festival's Independent Stage remains a mystery for a little while longer. Sunday's headliner is reggae great Pato Banton, whose appearance last year lit up the audience in a big way. Minus the top billing, Saturday has Carolyn Sills Band, Molly Hanmer, Jessica Malone, and Guitars Not Guns Band. Banton leads Sunday, with Samba Legal/De Franco Dancers, Steven Graves Band, Sensory Tribe, and Leche Malo/Vincent Randazzo filling out the rest of the day.

The second stage (formally the Reel to Real Stage) has moved and is now called the West Ortiz Stage. Saturday features, from top to bottom, Kinder Creatures with Lillie Lemon and Erica Wobbles, American Trashbird, The Virtuals, and Dan Frechette & Laurel Thomsen. Sunday's top band is The Eldorados, preceded by Red Beans & Rice, Fields of Eden, and Soul Shake. Additionally, Sweet Elena's Bakery presents Daniel Cortes both days. More venues will be announced at a later date.

BEST BETS

Barrel of Laughs: Best of San Francisco Comedy Competition, Friday, 6-10 p.m., Folktale Winery & Vineyards' Barrel Room, 8940 Carmel Valley Road, Carmel. General admission \$25, 21+ only. Featuring past winners and finalists from the SF Comedy Competition. Tonight's program includes Alex Elkin, 2016 winner; Maureen Langan, 2009 finalist; Chad Optiz, 2017 semi-finalist; and Myles Weber, 2015 winner. Chef Todd Fisher and his culinary team will be cooking cuisine available for purchase. Wine, beer, soda will be available at one of our bars and during the show for table service. Advance tickets available through Eventbrite.com.

Femmes & Folx, with Zoe Boekbinder, Phantom Tides & River Navaille: Friday, 7-10 p.m., Old Capital Books, 559 Tyler St., Monterey. Tickets \$10 – \$20 sliding scale, advance through www.zoeboekbinder.bandcamp.com. Fresh, funky, femme, and nonbinary performances in the latest installment of Femmes & Folx, a series of concerts highlighting gender diverse musicians and performers. Zoe Boekbinder's voice sounds like its being played off a vinyl record as it floats over her intricately finger-picked guitar. She has toured all over Europe and North America for the past seven years, since the release of the first album. The latest is "Shadow." Phantom Tides' Gracia Logue-Sargeant is a singer/songwriter based in Oakland who brings heartbreaking songwriting, otherworldly vocals, and dreamy guitar riffs together in a unique and soulful way. Navaille is a Seaside songwriter whose fluttering soprano is matched by a richly emotional chest voice, backed up by warm acoustic baritone ukulele. Their lyric-centric writing can provoke both laughter and tears.

Pacific Grove Pops Orchestra's Season Finale: Saturday, 2 p.m., Pacific Grove Performing Arts Center, 836 Forest Ave., Pacific Grove. Free, although donations are welcome.

The orchestra's sixth season comes to a close with this Season Finale Concert, featuring such popular favorites as "Bohemian Rhapsody," "Hamilton," "Rocky Broadway", "St. Paul's Suite," "Havana," and "Rhapsody in Blue." Conducted by PG Pops founder and artistic director Barbara Priest, the orchestra was founded to support and engage local student musicians through rigorous advance study and performances with award-winning music educators and professions. "We are delighted to continue our tradition of providing culturally rich, fun, and engaging concerts for the community's pleasure," she said. "Students of all ages working alongside professionals have created a unique musical community."

Renee Wahl & the Sworn Secrets, plus American Trashbird: Tuesday, 7-10 p.m., The Jade Lounge, 2110 Fremont St., Monterey, \$10 at the door. Nashville-based Wahl is touring in support of her new album "Cut To The Bone." Its nine tracks feature the "purveyor of pure outlaw Americana." Wahl whose vocal delivery and lyrical prowess has drawn comparisons to the likes of Roseanne Cash, Dolly Parton, and Maria McKee. Her music crosses many boundaries, with brooding rockers, road-worn ballads and even an old-western-style humorous, yet unflinching tribute to mental health treatment called "Meds." American Trashbird is an arrangement of familiar faces in the Monterey music scene featuring Kenny Chung (guitar, vocals), Alaina Musich (keys, synth, vocals) and Daniel Cortez (bass, guitar, drums). This specific species of bird can often be heard singing in beautiful harmony, collecting rustic rhythms for their nest of trash and class. Recycling forgotten refuse from the bins of blues rock, the richness of roots music, and some liberties with Latin beats they have forged a cry of their own.



The Purple Xperience: Wednesday, 8 p.m., Sunset Center, San Carlos at Ninth, Carmel. \$59-\$79, seating and dance floor tickets available at www.sunsetcenter.org or 831-620-2048.

Since its inception in 2011, The Purple Xperience is a true tribute to Prince: true to the original, hailing from Minneapolis, Minnesota and created by Matt Fink of The Revolution. The Purple Xperience embodies the charismatic and uncannily accurate renditions of Prince through lead singer Marshall Charloff, who styles the magic of Prince's talent in an unmatched fashion through his showmanship, vocals and multi-instrumental capacity on guitar and piano, along with authentic band costumes, impeccable harmonies, spirit and energy, all coming together to give the audience the Prince "live in concert" experience. Sing and dance the night away to "Purple Rain," "1999," "Raspberry Beret," "Kiss," "Let's Go Crazy," "When Doves Cry," and many more!

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