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Bunch of vagabonds

Eclectic klezmer band celebrates its 10th anniversary

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Portland Tribune

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Lovejoy's city work shines in new light

Author brings to life an overlooked leader in Portland's history

By **STEVE LAW**
The Tribune

Bubonic plague struck San Francisco in August 1907, and Portland and other Pacific ports feared they'd be hit next.

One month into her job as the nation's first big-city female public health officer, Esther Dahl...



SCHOOL'S ARTS GO A LITTLE 'WILD'





t was born Oct. 31, 2002, at Bella Faccia Pizzeria on Northeast Alberta Street.

Dressed as a giant oven mitt, Robin Jackson walked in and noticed Eric Stern, an accordion player wearing a top hat with bats on it. Not real bats, but paper-mache, Stern says now.

Vagabond Opera had already come to life through the creativity of Stern and friends, but it solidified itself when he and Jackson met at the pizza place and later jammed together.

"We could tell immediately we were simpatico," Stern says.

evolving into an eclectic group with belly dancers and cabaret stars.

Vagabond Opera will put on its sixth annual Transylvania Voodoo Ball while also celebrating its 10-year anniversary, Wednesday, Oct. 31, at Star Theater. It should be a heck of a party, given the fun nature of Vagabond Opera, with its costumes and range of music that can be hard to define.

Trained in opera and schooled in Eastern European Jewish klezmer, Stern says Vagabond Opera has been perfectly at home in Portland, which he calls "a laboratory of music."

He adds: "Klezmer is such a gateway

learned from every music from around the world, that we use as tools and colors for our palette. We're more interested in creating our original music. A lot of people say it's Eastern Euro cabaret. It's obviously not a rock band. We're not a jazz band. We're not an opera company, although sometimes we think as opera, with our voice still taking shape. So, hopefully it's a unique thing. It's definitely an ensemble project, even though I lead it."

The six-person group (including four singers, featuring 15 languages) has changed characters during the years, but

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theatrecompany.org, \$19

"Duck For President"

Why not, right? Oregon Children's Theatre's election production pits the Duck against Farmer Brown for president.

2 p.m. Saturdays-Sundays, 5 p.m. Saturdays, through Nov. 4, Newmark Theatre, 1111 S.W. Broadway, ticketmaster.com, \$18-\$30 adults, \$15-\$26 children

"BloodyVox: Fresh Blood"

BodyVox celebrates the company's favorite holiday frightful fun, a Halloween classic with debuts of new choreography and film elements from Jamey Hampton and Ashley Roland, artistic directors.

7:30 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays and Halloween, 2 p.m. Saturdays, Oct. 18-Nov. 3, BodyVox Dance Center, 1201 N.W. 17th Ave., bodyvox.com, starting at \$36

MUSIC

Portland Gay Men's Chorus

The group, opening its 33rd season, puts on its "Classical Matinee" with the theme "Love and Marriage."

3 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 21, Kaul Auditorium/Reed College, 3203 S.E. Woodstock Blvd., pdxgmc.org, starting at \$17

Tony Lucca

A big fan of NBC's "The Voice?" The Season 2 winner and former Mickey Mouse Club member alongside Christina Aguilera and Britney Spears will perform in Portland. He and Diego Boneta ("Rock of Ages") are part of the same record company, 222 Records, and Lucca will be joined by Tigard's Justin Hopkins, another contestant on "The Voice," at Alberta Rose.

8 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 24, Alberta Rose Theatre, 3000 N.E. Alberta St., albertarosetheatre.com, \$15, \$17 day of show



TRIBUNE PHOTO: ALVARO FONTAN

Retired and living in La Paz, Mexico, author R.J. Archer remains fascinated with the topic of ancient civilizations. He has penned seven books, with an eighth planned for 2013 release.

Author digs into mystery of archaeology

R.J. Archer sees fascinating plots in underwater sites

By JASON VONDERSMITH
The Tribune

Author R.J. "Dick" Archer admits to being "a conspiracy theory fan."

After all, his two series of books, "Seeds of Civilization" and "Parallel Ops," examine mysterious archaeological finds and explore the possibility of ancient civilizations — in a fictionalized manner. But even he seriously doubts that things will change on Dec. 21, 2012.

The Mayan calendar supposedly ends then, and the fantastical among us believe our lives will be dramatically altered.

Archer laughs.

"I really don't believe that, and neither do the Maya," he says. "A lot of articles have been written by college-educated Maya, who say we made all that up. I don't think the poles will shift and the Earth will tip over."

Archer had originally targeted Dec. 21 as the

release date for his fourth and final "Parallel Ops" book, "The Teachers," but it'll still be in the works well into 2013. So, clearly, he's counting on our lives not changing forever on Dec. 21.

A nice niche

A technical writer and computer consultant by trade while living in the Portland area for four decades, the 66-year-old Archer has delved into fiction writing in recent years, and moved to La Paz, Mexico, upon retirement three years ago.

He has always been fascinated by the oceans, being a diver and snorkeler — so, the Baja peninsula of Mexico is a comfortable and convenient place to call home. He lives there with his wife (and publicist/marketer/designer), Marty, and their children and grandchildren also live in the country.

He has carved out a nice niche for himself, as an author bent on furthering the discussion of who inhabited the planet thousands of years ago, where they went and what they left behind — a version of "Ancient Aliens," the popular series on The History Channel. The oceans hold many an-

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without feeling over-thought. The menu is quite concise, offering about five starters and as many entrees. Desserts are sim-

plation in a bleak part of downtown that always feels about 10 degrees colder than the rest of the city.

after 5 p.m. and substantial happy hour discounts, both before and after the dinner hour. From 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. on weekdays,

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Archer: Series looks at unknowns

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swers, Archer says, and just as the ocean remains the great unexplored area of our inhabitable sphere, he expects clarity in questions as time goes on.

"Everything we know about archaeology is derived from the study of 30 percent of the planet," he says. "There's still 70 percent (the oceans) that archaeologists haven't looked at. Because of the rise in oceans since the last Ice Age, there are millions of miles of coastline that are now underwater that would have been inhabitable 20,000 years ago. That would have been the logical place to build communities back then.

"Whatever was there, and I believe there were a lot of sites, those are all underwater and they haven't been explored."

His debut book in the first series, "Tractix," introduces his four characters and how the Maya could predict solar eclipses to the minute, yet lived with-

out the use of wheels to move things.

"Why were they so advanced in one area and so primitive in other areas?" Archer asks.

"Tsubute" centers around the Yonaguni pyramid in the waters off Japan. Subsequent discoveries were made of other pyramids.

"That's a lost civilization," Archer says.

And, "Triangle" is about contemporary work near Bimini Island (the Bahamas), "where they've demonstrated there was an advanced culture there about 15,000 years ago, thousands of years before they thought the Indians first came to North America, and three times as old as the pyramids in Egypt," Archer says. "They were an advanced maritime culture that built harbors and structures to protect the harbors. ... A lot of things left unexplained. ... I think Bimini is the tip of the iceberg."

The "Parallel Ops" books are "The Scientists," "The Informants" and "The Guardians," the latter his newest release, and the second series follows the four fictional characters and their attempts to figure things

out. (For info on books, go to rjarcherbooks.com).

Archer says archaeology has been "a big yawn" for him in the past, but writing the books has piqued his interest. He's curious to see what researchers and academic types choose to explore and acknowledge in the future; he says findings and theories dispel accepted beliefs and truths among academics.

"Archaeologists like to dig in the dirt and not in the mud," he says. "Like with the Bahamas, there are enough people who have published articles about what's there, or think is there, you would think someone would have got interested and mounted a major expedition. It doesn't seem to be happening.

"And there are sites in India and all over Asia, especially near the equator, where they've found underwater strange things."

He understands that people dispute the existence of ancient civilizations, especially when considering an influence from aliens.

"I'm not sure I believe that myself," Archer says. "But, the archaeology is all real and all mysterious."

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