
News from the Stage: '8 Tens' Reboots for Fall



BY [WALLACE BAINE](#)
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Actors' Theatre rebounds from COVID and other turmoil with a different spin on its signature short-plays festival.



Scott Kravitz (left) and Sarah Kauffman Michael in an "8 Tens @ 8" rehearsal at Actors' Theatre.
(Kevin Painchaud / Lookout Santa Cruz.)

The calendar says Labor Day, and as all longtime fans of Santa Cruz theater know, this is definitely not "8 Tens" season. But somehow, in this upside-down world, here it is: The celebrated annual 10-minute play festival, a local midwinter tradition for more than 25 years, is set for a post-pandemic reboot.

On Friday, Sept. 9, "8 Tens @ 8" is back with a four-weekend run at its longtime home, the cozy Actors' Theatre in downtown Santa Cruz.

The last we heard from the festival, it was laid low by the Omicron variant of the COVID virus, canceling its season set for January 2022. That was followed a few weeks later by [the abrupt departure of the festival's entire leadership team](#), citing exhaustion and the difficulties of replacing one of the theater company's key figures, Bonnie Ronzio, who died in 2020. The bell was tolling for the Actors' Theatre company.

But new board members stepped up and brought new energy. And not only is "8 Tens" on schedule to occupy its accustomed spot in the calendar in early 2023, but the new board and the theater's considerable volunteer workforce is all coming together to salvage the '22 festival.

The reboot festival is a scaled-down version of the planned 2022 edition. But it is still true to its name. The program will feature eight 10-minute plays, one after another, each

from a different playwright, with a different director and a different theme. In recent pre-pandemic years, the popularity of the festival had pushed it beyond the limits of its title, with two separate programs of eight-play evenings. The originally planned 2022 schedule was to feature even more 10-minute plays, a little 13th-doughnut gift to each program, technically turning the festival into “18 Tens @ 8.” This month’s festival snaps back to the single program of eight plays.

Longtime Santa Cruz actor and director Suzanne Schrag was one of those who stepped up to serve on a new board of directors. She said that the board decided it was important to stake a claim in the calendar year 2022, to remind people that Actors’ Theatre is still around. So it made sense to revive some of the plays that were to be presented back in January.

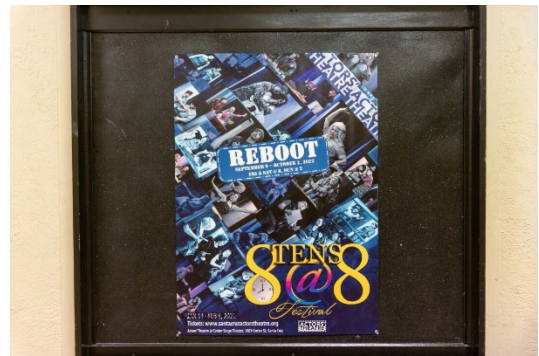
“We’ve decided that it’s OK that it’s a little seat-of-the-pants,” said Schrag. “We’re not using new posters, just a sticker over the old ones that says ‘Reboot’.

“So, we’ve been rounding up the props and, where did people put the costumes? We just felt like waiting until next January for the full festival was just too long to go without something happening.”

Masks and proof of vaccination will be required in the cozy Actors’ Theatre playhouse in the Santa Cruz Art Center.

As for the January event, Schrag said plans are proceeding to bring back the festival much as it was pre-pandemic, with the two separate programs. The festival will also happen slightly later in January, avoiding the problem of having tech week during the Christmas/New Year’s holiday period.

The 2022 “8 Tens @ 8” is set for Sept. 9 through Oct. 2, and runs Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. Tickets are now [on sale](#).



Kristin Brownstone (left) and Alyssa Woodbury rehearse for an “8 Tens @ 8” play. (Kevin Painchaud / Lookout Santa Cruz)