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PHOTO COURTESY OF MAURICE RAMIREZ

"Rising Seas," a series of music and theatrical shows coming to Alameda as part of the "Rising Tides" climate arts initiative next month, is meant to inspire islanders to get on the bandwagon of mitigating climate change. Featured in the series will be longtime Bay Area actor Ed Holmes, above with dancer Rachel Furst on Alameda's shoreline, cast in the role of "Watson 2.0, the Climate Detective from the Future."

ALAMEDA

'Rising Seas' climate art, performance series starts in May

Island organization Rhythmix Cultural Works producing free events featuring time-traveling detective 'Watson 2.0'

By Paul Kilduff
Correspondent

The ramifications of climate change, most notably rising sea levels, affect everyone — but Alamedans are especially vulnerable due to their location on San Francisco Bay.

Despite the overwhelming nature of the problem, "Rising Seas" (rhythmixrisingseas.org), a theatrical and musical show coming to Alameda as part of the "Rising Tides" climate arts initiative next month (risingtidesalameda.org), endeavors to inspire islanders to get on the climate change mitigation bandwagon.

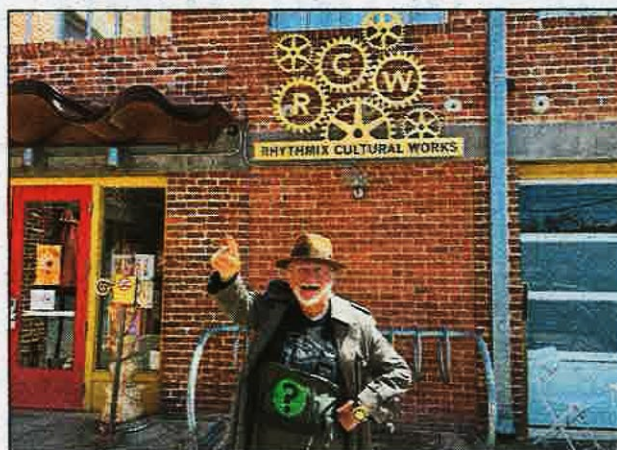
The Master of Ceremonies behind this effort is longtime Bay Area actor and all-around rabble-rouser Ed Holmes. A veteran of the San Francisco Mime Troupe, Holmes has also acted in movies (imdb.com/name/nm8654580) such as "The Right Stuff" and is the shining light behind the annual April 1 "Saint Stupid's Day parade" in San Francisco.

In "Rising Seas," Holmes plays Watson 2.0, otherwise known as the "Climate Detective from the Future."

The first of the three shows — a continuation of a program begun last July — debuts along with a musical performance May 31 at the Seaplane Lagoon on Alameda's North Point. It will be preceded May 9 through June 1 by the "Rising Tides" photo festival, "In Plain Site" (risingtidesalameda.org/in-plain-site).

Appropriately, Watson 2.0's get-up includes waders — the high waisted rubber pants held up by suspenders worn by water logged fishermen — emblazoned with a neon green question mark. The outfit better allows Watson 2.0 to traverse the land where he lives 50 years in the future that's engulfed by water due to climate change. He also employs a vintage smart watch-type device called "The Temporal Fluctuator" to travel from one time to another.

"I am a member of the Alameda Time Patrol. And I've been sent from the not-so-distant future to find out why we're up to our necks in water. And so I'm looking for some climate clues as to how our engineers can help remedy the situation," said Holmes recently



PHOTOS ABOVE, LOWER RIGHT BY PAUL KILDUFF FOR BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

Longtime Bay Area actor Ed Holmes, cast in the role of "Watson 2.0," points to the future. His character will be part of the "Rising Seas" series of music and theatrical shows coming to Alameda as part of the "Rising Tides" climate arts initiative.

as he finely tuned his performance with director Jeff Raz at the Rhythmix Cultural Works studios, the Alameda arts organization producing "Rising Seas."

Holmes describes Watson 2.0's role as leading audience members "through chunks of history to look for the clues in each place. I find how people dealt with the environment, what their attitudes were and try to add those all up. And after we come back through the time thing, I say, 'What did we all learn? And can we do something to mitigate the problems?'"

Some of the stories Watson 2.0 weaves into the 15-minute show explain how the Bay Area and Alameda were once an unspoiled paradise — that is until the Peralta family came in 1850 and, thanks to a land grant from the King of Spain, took over much of what is now the East Bay and subjugated the Native Americans who were there originally. Modernization proceeded and the East Bay as an unspoiled paradise got canceled, ac-

cording to the show.

Jumping still further ahead to the 1960s, Watson 2.0 describes the efforts of Berkeley nonprofit group "Save the Bay" that prevented further filling in of San Francisco Bay for housing — a very popular idea in the 1960s, at least for developers and politicians. Led by Catherine Kerr, Sylvia McLaughlin and Esther Gulick, "Save the Bay," which still exists, successfully lobbied against efforts to fill in much of the bay.

"There was talk of 'the environment' before that, but they made it real," says Holmes. "They saw the bay being filled in as a garbage dump and went, 'This is not good, let's do something.' They challenged the mantra of progress: 'You can't stop progress.' And they stopped it."

To further emphasize the importance of getting people energized about climate change, "Rising Seas" director Raz at Rhythmix has three audience members play the roles of Kerr, McLaughlin and Gulick

holding up signs protesting at a Berkeley City Council meeting featuring the then-pro-development Berkeley mayor — yes, Berkeley was actually pretty conservative in the early 1960s — "ranting and raving about environmentalists in the audience," says Raz. "He (the Berkeley mayor) comes up to the stage, sees them and goes, 'Oh, hello, Sylvia, Kay and Esther. It's nice to see you in my office again.'"

Assisting Watson 2.0 in fleshing out his time traveling tales is Colin Epstein, who plays different characters throughout the piece. Also integral to the performance are the sound effects heard for things like Watson 2.0's "Temporal Fluctuator" as it moves him from one moment in history to the next. These are performed by the show's creative director, Janet Koike, Holmes's wife who founded Rhythmix. The 15-minute play is essentially the same for each of the three performances but at each venue a special scene is added to highlight the area.

For instance, with the first performance at the Seaplane Lagoon, "Colin plays the pilot of the China

Clipper that left from Seaplane Lagoon in 1935 to fly to Guam and Hawaii," says Holmes. "When we're over on Bay Farm, it'll be Albert Francis Hegenberger, who was the pilot who flew out of what was then the beginning of Oakland airport."

In addition to the performances of Holmes et al, "Rising Seas" May 31 performance will include Batey Tambo, a Puerto Rican Bomba group brimming with Caribbean energy. Musicians slated to share the spotlight in the two other "Rising Seas" performances include wood and bamboo Balinese percussion masters Gamelan Sekar Jaya on June 21 at an Alameda park to be determined and Hawaiian music group Halau KaUaTuahine. They hit the stage July 12 at Shoreline Park on Bay Farm Island.

All of the performances are free. For more information on any of the "Rising Seas" performances visit rhythmixrisingseas.org.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF BATEY TAMBO

The May 31 "Rising Seas" show in Alameda will also feature musical acts that include Batey Tambo, seen performing above, a Puerto Rican Bomba group brimming with Caribbean energy.



Rhythmix Cultural Works creative director Janet Koike shares a moment with Jeff Raz, the director of "Rising Seas."