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## Lotta's Opera on the Streets of San Francisco

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A free dance festival with outdoor performances designed as a fun walking tour was presented this last weekend for San Franciscans and those lucky enough to be visiting the city.

Beginning at the intersection of Third and Kearny Streets at San Francisco's landmark Lotta's Fountain, a 45-minute guided journey, that literally hopped, skipped and jumped to four locations within one block of Market Street, was given by dancers and performers of Epiphany Dance Productions. Their goal is to develop dynamic, cutting-edge work that is accessible, relevant and engaging for the public.

The Art on Market Street Program brings contemporary artwork by Bay Area Artists to San Francisco's main thoroughfare, expressing the vitality of San Francisco. Through vigorous nurturing of public art, Lotta's Opera was funded by the San Francisco Arts Commission.



Lotta Crabtree protects a young woman in the foreground while a group of characters react to the 1906 Earthquake in the background. (Merian Kiernan/The Epoch Times)

In Lotta's Opera, song and dance demonstrated San Francisco's history at the turn of the century. Stories of the Gold Rush, the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, even the infamous diva, Luisa Tetrazzini, were put into play. In the open air and sunshine on the street, they told stories through movement, sound and spoken word. Live musicians accompanied them with horns, accordion, and drums. After each act was completed, the entourage moved with the audience to another locale along the street.

Passersby were curious. The audience of over a hundred was enthralled. Margo Noble from Berkeley said, "It is a fabulous production and it was my blessing to encounter it in rehearsal on Post St. after the Darfur demonstration last Sunday. It is so diverse and invocative. It's free and very well done."

San Francisco is full of colorful history. Lotta Crabtree was a character in California's gold rush history. She began her career as a young girl performing for gold rush miners and went on to become one of America's most popular stage performers. She retired from the theater in 1892 at the age of 45. She made one final public appearance for "Lotta Crabtree Day" in San Francisco at the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition, where one of the primary exposition buildings, the beautifully renovated Palace of Fine Arts, still remains standing today.

But the oldest surviving monument in San Francisco is Lotta's fountain. It was donated to San Francisco by singer/dancer Lotta Crabtree in 1875. After the earthquake and fire in 1906, the fountain, which was one of the few remaining structures on Market Street, became a central meeting place for San Franciscans. And it is still displaying its physical beauty and vibrant spirit to foster contemporary San Francisco with song and dance. Lotta would be pleased.