



**BEAL STREET BREAKDOWN** This number from Tandy Beal's remixed 'Nutcracker' offers further proof that Sid & Marty Krofft have irreversibly altered reality.

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## Interview With an Icon

Tandy Beal unveils 'Mixed Nutz!'—the Nutcracker REMixed

BY MIKE CONNOR

**O**ftentimes when the phone rings, it's a telemarketer, or Uncle Ned. Other times, it's the San Francisco Performing Arts Library (funded by Aunty NEA, a.k.a. the National Endowment for the Arts) calling to name you one of the four dance icons of the West. At least that's what happens if you're dancer and choreographer Tandy Beal. And when it happened last month, Beal immediately grasped the gravitas of the honor.

"I laughed and said, OK, I can get my husband to bow down now!" Why shouldn't he? Beal's husband—the composer Jon Scoville—has already publicly confessed that Beal saved him from a life of playing country music in Nashville, voting Republican and playing golf on Sundays. On a recent Sunday at It's Beach, Scofield and Beal spent the morning with a couple hundred of their closest friends watching a performance choreographed by Beal. On her cue, dancers dressed in Victorian-era garb emerged from the sand and wondered slowly about the beach, as if they'd been buried there for a century, before slowly disrobing

and swimming out to a fishing boat waiting offshore. The piece moved at about the pace a message in a bottle moves at sea—slowly, with the tide—as dogs, children and skim boarders carried on in real time. The contrast and interplay between the performance and real life was surreal—a tone which happens to be a Beal specialty.

With layers of delicate fabric draped from her tall and slender figure, Beal's movements often resemble those of an enchantress underwater—even in a café, where she conveyed her excitement about the third annual presentation of *Mixed Nutz!*, Beal's extravagantly modern take on Tchaikovsky's holiday classic, *The Nutcracker*. Beal says her 1982 version of the ballet was what got the attention of the Pickle Family Circus, for whom she went on to write, direct and choreograph for over 10 years.

In 2003 she revisited *The Nutcracker*, introducing what she called *The New Nut*. She came at it again the following year with *Mixed Nutz!* This year Beal kept the name but changed the show again; yet, as in previous years, it features circus talent from around the world. Wang

Hong, formerly of Cirque du Soleil, was a gold medalist in the world circus festival. Svetlana Gololobova, formerly of the Moscow Circus, is one of the world's premier hand balancers. They'll be joined by local favorites like Iman Lizerazu the clown, Rock Lerum (playing Uncle Drosselmeyer), rhythmic gymnast Saki Sakamoto and former Flying Karamazov Brother Tim Furst, among many others.

One of the most unique aspects of the show comes from SoVoSo, the a cappella group whose voices are responsible for each and every note in the show. That the show is "loosely based" on *The Nutcracker* has allowed SoVoSo to take plenty of creative liberties with the music. For example, SoVoSo composer and singer David Worm turned the Arabian Dance piece into what Beal describes as a "screaming punk call to the universe."

"When Dave first said to me he wanted to score it like that, I went, 'Are you sure?'" recalls Beal. Worm confessed that he'd already done it. When she heard it, Beal approved.

"It's a joy rush," says Beal. "Your jaw just drops listening to them."

Standing at the helm of such a talent-filled show, Beal gushes with

the joy of working in and creating community. "It's mit schlagsabne," says Beal, "which is German for 'with whipped cream.' You get one bonbon after the other." Understanding that everyone—not just the people who can afford them—wants bonbons, Tandy Beal and Company and the Mello Center for the Performing Arts have given away hundreds of tickets to homeless people, underprivileged children, senior centers and other social service organizations. Such philanthropy reflects Beal's artistic gestalt, which has always been more about connections and community than ticket sales.

"I hope this becomes the nontraditional tradition here in Santa Cruz," continues Beal with breathy enthusiasm. "I'm delighted to have a show that talks to everybody, and sometimes that's just theatrical hype, but in this situation it's really, really true."

Tandy Beal's *MIXED NUTZ!* plays Dec. 2 at 7pm, Dec. 3 at 2pm and 7:30pm and Dec. 4 at 2pm at the Mello Center, 250 E. Beach St., Watsonville. Tickets are \$15-\$30; call Mello Box Office, 831.763.4047, or go to [www.mellocenter.com](http://www.mellocenter.com).

Metro Santa Cruz

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