



The Epicenter of Filipino American Performing Arts

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Media Kit:

<https://www.bindlestiffstudio.org/bindlestiff-30-media-kit>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Bindlestiff Studio Celebrates 30 Years of Underground, Unapologetic
Performing Arts**

San Francisco, CA – October 14, 2019 – Bindlestiff Studio, the epicenter of Filipino American performing arts, celebrates 30 years of bold artistic expression and community engagement with *Welcome Home*, a gala/fundraiser on Saturday Dec 7, 2019 from 6 – 9:30 p.m. at SOMArts Cultural Center. The evening features past and present Bindlestiff Studio artists including an innovative menu curated by food activist, Thuy Tran (co-founder of the Rooted Recipes Project and member of Bindlestiff Studio's all-Asian-American-women comedy troupe, Granny Cart Gangstas) and performances by renowned comic, Kevin Camia (Bindlestiff member since 1997 who recently made his network television debut on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*), and local Filipino American indie-rock legends, Julie Plug. Former Bindlestiff Studio Development Director and award-winning queer performer, Kat Evasco, will host.

Bindlestiff Studio was founded in 1989 by Chrystene Ells, Chris Brophy, and a group of local theater artists, and for many years it flourished as an experimental theater space. In 1996, at the age of 18, Filipina immigrant Lorna Chui Velasco premiered her one-woman show, *Babae* (Tagalog for woman), at Bindlestiff, directed by her mentor, Ells. *Babae* attracted standup comic and theater artist, Allan S. Manalo, who was looking for a venue to perform sketch comedy with his Filipino American theater troupe, tongue in A mood. Manalo, along with his wife Joyce would eventually take over the reins of the space, transforming it into the cultural epicenter for Filipino American performing arts in the Bay Area, the longest continually running black box theater in San Francisco's South of Market area, and the primary performing arts venue of the SOMA Pilipinas Cultural district.

"Bindlestiff is where I found my creative home," says Bindlestiff Studio Artistic Director Aureen Almario, who has volunteered with the organization since 2004. "Where else can you

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Bindlestiff Studio is a 501(c)(3) non-profit theater organization whose aim is to cultivate artists who reflect and celebrate the diverse values, traditions, and histories of Pilipino and Filipino American cultures through bold artistic expression and community engagement. For more information, please visit our website at www.bindlestiffstudio.org.



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experience performances centered on People of Color perspectives of geek culture, Pinoy punk, plays in Tagalog, shadow puppetry about a domestic worker, rowdy Asian American womxn sketch comedy, complex queer stories, and more, all in one space?"

But this unique theater serving Filipino Americans was almost lost to neighborhood redevelopment. In 2003, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA) acquired the building that housed Bindlestiff Studio with plans to turn it into a low-cost housing project. They made no commitment to retain theater space in their plans. Community members, including then-Supervisor Chris Daly, rallied in support of Bindlestiff Studio. In reaction to public outcry for the theater's preservation, SFRA committed to building the shell of a new 99-seat, black box theater for Bindlestiff in the basement of the newly rebuilt housing complex.

The new Bindlestiff Studio opened its doors in September 2011 and offers theatrical productions; music and film festivals; workshops in directing, production, acting, stand-up comedy, and writing; as well as arts education programs for youth and seniors. Several now-mainstream artists have graced the stage at Bindlestiff, including **Ali Wong** (*Baby Cobra*, *Hard Knock Wife*, *Always Be My Maybe*), **Nico Santos** (*Superstore*, *Crazy Rich Asians*), *Welcome Home* performer **Kevin Camia** (*The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*), **L.A. Renigen** (*Colma: The Musical*, *Bitter Melon*), and **Nicole Maxali** (*Fruitvale Station*). *San Francisco Chronicle* theater reviewer Lily Janiak says, "Bindlestiff has what so many other theaters in the region crave: a diverse and young audience." But Bindlestiff's focus has remained on both its local community and the displaced San Francisco Filipino diaspora in the broader Bay Area.

"The once working class neighborhood of South of Market has been undergoing drastic changes over the past 30 years," says John Elberling, Executive Director of Tenants and Owners Development Corporation (TODCO). "Bindlestiff Studio serves more than just artists. Through their programs and community partnerships, they serve youth, seniors, residents, and our much needed SOMA social services. That's why TODCO has put forward a \$3,000 matching donation in celebration of Bindlestiff's 30th anniversary to encourage Bindlestiff patrons and San Francisco constituents to support this anchor institution in SOMA."

In addition to live entertainment, gala attendees will enjoy a mouth-watering party spread from local chefs including Ox and Tiger, the Filipino and Japanese inspired pop-up team; Henry Hsu, creator of delicious Taiwanese dumplings; and food sponsorship from Hodo Foods. Open bar included for those 21 and over. Supporters can purchase tickets to *Welcome Home* and make donations at <https://www.bindlestiffstudio.org/bindlestiff30>

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About Bindlestiff:

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About the Performers:

Kevin Camia is based in Los Angeles, where - as a member of The Dress Up Gang, the show was selected for the 2019 Sundance Film Festival. Kevin has toured the country opening for Ali Wong. Most recently he made his network television debut on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* and has appeared on Comedy Central's *Live at Gotham* and Seeso's *The Guest List*. He was voted Best Up and Coming Comic at the Rooftop Aspen Comedy Festival and was selected as a Comic's Comic on Esquire.com. Kevin has headlined sold out shows at Just For Laughs Toronto, and has performed at The Outside Lands Music and Arts Festival, RiotLA, The Oddball Comedy & Curiosity Festival, SF Sketchfest, among others. He has written for MTV's "Ridiculousness", and the "The Funny Drop" w/ Frankie Quinones, a web-based channel Mas Major produced by Broadway Video and NBC Universal. Kevin was a member of tongue in A mood and frequently performed at Bindlestiff as his rock star alter-ego, Bobby Banduria.

Bay Area popsters **Julie Plug** formed in 1992 with influences ranging from the Cocteau Twins, the Smiths, the Sundays, and electronic music. They found favor on college radio, and were often played on Bay Area stations KITS Live 105.3 FM, Alice 97.3 FM and LA station KROQ 106.7 FM. They signed to independent label Classified Records and their music aired on primetime television shows, including eight episodes on Dawson's Creek as well as several independent films. In December 2018, the band commemorated the 20th anniversary release of their debut album, *Starmaker*, with two California shows. Julie Plug has performed numerous headlining shows at Bindlestiff.

Kat Evasco is a writer, stand up comedian, performance artist, and educator. Evasco is best known for her national touring autobiographical one-woman show, *Mommy Queerest*. Kat studied acting and personal narrative storytelling with Anna Deavere Smith and playwriting with Cherrie Moraga. She developed and directed *Prieto*, a solo show written and performed by nationally acclaimed poet and undocumented activist, Yosimar Reyes, in collaboration with Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, Jose Antonio Vargas. She has recently taken the helm as senior program director at social justice arts org, CultureStrike. She has served as the Board President and Development Director for Bindlestiff Studio, and is the co-creator of the LGBTQ+ production, *The Bakla Show*.

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CALENDAR RELEASE

WHO:

Originally opened in 1989, Bindlestiff Studio became the only permanent, community-based performing arts venue in the nation dedicated to showcasing emerging Filipino American and Pilipino artists. Bindlestiff Studio provides the often under-served Filipino American community access to diverse offerings in theatrical productions, music and film festivals, workshops in directing, production, acting, stand-up comedy, and writing, as well as a youth theater program.

WHAT:

Welcome Home, a gala/fundraiser celebrating Bindlestiff Studio's 30th anniversary, features past and present Bindlestiff artists including an innovative menu curated by food activist, Thuy Tran (co-founder of the Rooted Recipes Project and member of Bindlestiff Studio's all-Asian-American-women comedy troupe, Granny Cart Gangstas) and performances by renowned comic, Kevin Camia (Bindlestiff member since 1997 who recently made his network television debut on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*), and local Filipino American indie-rock legends, Julie Plug. Former Bindlestiff Studio Development Director and award-winning queer performer, Kat Evasco, will host.

WHERE:

SOMArts Cultural Center
934 Brannan Street
San Francisco, CA 94103

WHEN:

December 7, 2019
6 – 9:30 p.m.

COST

\$75 - Gala Tickets Pre-sale
\$100 – Gala Tickets At-the-Door

MORE INFORMATION

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