When I first heard about Two River Theater’s upcoming performance “for anyone from 2 to 102,” I immediately flashed back to being a kid, dressed up and performing on a “stage” excitedly for my parents (with an occasional dismayed pet that had also been dressed for the performance, naturally), and then I thought about my daughter, who is currently in that stage (along with our currently dismayed pet). I realized that I couldn’t pass up such a great opportunity for us to experience a large-scale performance on a real stage! Now that I am further into the rehearsals, however, I can say with confidence that what makes Bolero Red Bank so amazing are the people involved. It is our own community that makes this show sparkle!

We showed up for the casting call, which ultimately brought together Monmouth County residents of all shapes, sizes, ages and colors, and stood in a circle. All different, yet all united in our shared purpose- Red Bank’s own performance of Bolero, choreographed by the incredibly entertaining and talented Larry Keigwin, and performed with dancers from Keigwin + Company.
Larry Keigwin and cast members from Bolero Red Bank

Keigwin had us waving beach towels, posing with sunglasses, and doing Busby Berkley-style choreography with beach balls (well, sort of… I’m not sure how close we got to that… but we were in high spirits over it in any case). *Red Bank Bolero* marks Keigwin’s eighth community Bolero performance, with others having been in New York, Toledo, and Santa Barbara. He had this to say about the project:

“Each time, the people are both the same [in their enthusiasm] and entirely different, which makes the process so interesting. We use different signature props based on the location—for example we had rock climbers and backpacks in Colorado, and umbrellas in New York. I love the immediate exchange with people that happens in this type of performance. Usually there is a distance between the dancers and the audience. There is also the teaching element to this that is highly rewarding.

This sentiment is also shared by two of Keigwin’s performers, who have been (patiently) assisting us in learning dance moves and counting out the music.

Gary, Jaclyn and one very excited 5-year-old!
Gary Schaufeld (with the company 3 years)- “Bolero is all about the participants. It’s a product of the people who are in it, and I love that it is such a narrative piece with a clear story. It’s fun to pull out everyone’s specific characters. That’s what makes each location so different.”

Jaclyn K. Walsh (1 1/2 years in the core company)- “Everything is pretty unpredictable. Some of the most entertaining things are also the most unexpected. This big group of people comes together for the first time and it’s fun to see what happens as they work together. I also love the teaching aspect of it. Working with the kids is fun because you never know what they are going to do!”

Of course, a story about our own Bolero wouldn’t be complete without mentioning the great people who came together, every night for 2 hours, to practice and fine-tune our dance moves. We came as strangers, and have fast become friends, with each cast member bringing a unique bit of greatness to the performance. There are friends Margie, Dave and Carmen from Asbury Park. Margie and Dave are neighbors, and Carmen (who is a regular at Two River Theater) heard about Bolero first. Margie was excited to come and perform, though Dave had to be convinced (he’s enjoying himself very much now… especially throwing the frisbee). All have enjoyed getting to meet new people, and living out her dream of performing on stage. There is also mom Minerva and her kids Andrea and Marcos (you’ll see them run across the stage with boogie boards in the opening crowd scene). Minerva originally came just for herself, but then thought her kids might enjoy it as well… and they are having a blast! She says this of the gathering,”I love that in this age of social media, all these different people have sacrificed to come together for two hours as a community.” What a wonderful thing!
Minerva and her kids (with my daughter, Delia tagging along) are enjoying the community connection at Bolero.

And really, in the end, that’s what this is all about, isn’t it? Meeting new people, making a sacrifice and a commitment, and then reaping the rewards that come from community engagement at this level… coming together to dance and having a great time in the process!

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