

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## At The Secret City, 'We Worship Art'

Chris Wells · Wednesday, March 11th, 2015

***When is the next The Secret City event? Find out here: <http://thesecretecity.org/events/>***

What is The Secret City?

Is it vaudeville for the soul? Communal ceremony? ArtChurch?

I founded The Secret City, and even *I* have a hard time describing it!

That's because people have such expansively different experiences. Here's what they say: *If we could bottle the positive energy in that room today, it could change the world. A truly wonderful experience. Amazed by the continuing creativity. A revelation, a celebration, and an inspiration. Funny, touching, and wonderfully, unorthodoxically spiritual. The Secret City is like everything good in life in one package: song, dance, spectacle, storytelling, humor, irreverence, connecting people, and getting somewhere deeper.*



To fill in the picture, here's a little history.

Begun in NYC in 2007, The Secret City is the Obie Award-winning arts organization that worships art. With monthly gatherings in New York City, and quarterly gatherings in LA, each event has a unique theme, with art and performance curated around that theme. Each event follows a template that is structured like a religious service, but filled with art and performance – our house band, the work of a visual artist, a food offering from a local chef, cultural calendar, live performance, an interactive component, a story, silent meditation, a featured musical guest, and songs by our choir, The Secret City Singers. Afterward, we have a coffee hour where people bring food to share, and folks hang out and reconnect with friends or make new ones.

Sounds kinda like church, huh? And that's one of the reasons it's hard to describe what we do, because our mission is to do the work that religious communities do but for non-religious people, those who find connections and purpose in art. We believe that art-making is spiritual, involving mindfulness, intention and discipline, and that art itself connects people in ways that are joyful, inspiring and deep.

Since 2007, we've presented an amazing array of artists and performers including Grammy winner Rosanne Cash, Tony Winners Stew and Michael Cerveris, downtown stars like Justin Vivian Bond, Taylor Mac, John Fleck, Jennifer Miller, Jomama Jones, as well as tap dancers, jugglers, aerialists,

harpists, singers, painters, collagists, sculptors, hula dancers, fiddle players, Balkan singers, Butoh dancers, contortionists, sound artists, a beatboxer, playwrights, actors, DJs, burlesque performers, spoken word artists, African drummers and many, many more.



Lately, I've been thinking of The Secret City as a tent revival. But tent revival might make you think of fire and brimstone and people speaking in tongues. So, maybe I should say Artistic Tent Revival, but don't let the artistic part of that phrase make you think it's exclusive: The Secret City is for anyone in need of reconnecting to their source.

Thousands of people have taken part in our services. Last year, after 5 years of holding our events in New York City, we started making quarterly pilgrimages to LA.

So here's an invitation: please join us for one of our gatherings. We meet in New York City at Dixon Place on the last Sunday of the month. In Los Angeles, we meet at The Bootleg Theater on Beverly Blvd, about every three months. There will be a different theme for each event and a great line-up of artists and performers taking part. You can bring a food offering for the coffee hour, if you like. And, if you want to get involved, email us to volunteer – we always need folks to help make the events happen. And, bring your friends. There's a suggested donation of \$15. If you have kids, you can bring them, too; we provide free childcare.

I really hope to see you at The Secret City; I'm excited to hear how *you'll* describe it.



*For more info, visit The Secret City at [www.theseecretcity.org](http://www.theseecretcity.org).*

*Cultural Weekly is a proud media sponsor of The Secret City.*

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