

Dawn Festival

Sat., May 15, 7:30pm

39

Likes

California Academy of Sciences

Price: \$20-\$50

<http://www.dawnfestival.org>

Shavout Loud

By Andy Wright

The organizers of the **Dawn Festival** maintain that one of the most underappreciated Jewish holidays is also one of the most important. Shavuot celebrates the day when the Jewish people were given the Torah at Mount Sinai. Traditionally, this day has been marked with all-night rabbinical study sessions. The Dawn Festival is also kind of a cram session, but with a much different bent. The dizzying array of artists brought together for this bash is nearly overwhelming. Films screen, bands play, authors expound, cocktails are slung. Brash comedian Sandra Bernhard kvetches poetic about her spirituality and its influence on her long and colorful career, which has included stints on *Roseanne* and an off-Broadway one-woman show. Local writer Daniel Handler (best known by his nom de plume Lemony Snicket) mixes up drinks with expert concoctor Bryan



Ranere. You can watch Gary Shteyngart, the author of heady, critically acclaimed novel *Absurdistan*, chat before an audience, and then take in a reading by Davy Rothbart, whose *Found* magazine chronicles hilarious and poignant ephemera: shopping lists, love letters, Polaroids. Spike Jonze video-introduces a film celebrating the 80th birthday of Maurice Sendak of *Where the Wild Things Are* fame. The night spans a broad range of cultural experience and expression, with a mind-boggling refusal to stay within any specific aesthetic or theme (it ends with African dance music by Fool's Rush), which makes sense when you consider the vastness of the Jewish experience.