

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

And Still They Persevere

Ann Haskins · Wednesday, February 26th, 2020

Balanchine ballets in Santa Monica, immigrant tales by the dozen downtown, passion that doesn't end well in Northridge and Costa Mesa; flamenco in North Hollywood, site specific tap in University Park, and more SoCal dance this busy week.

5. When the heart wants what the heart wants #1

Now that Valentine's Day is over, apparently it is time for love stories with unhappy endings, starting with the poster child for tragic romances *Romeo and Juliet*. Canada's **Ballet BC** arrives with its contemporary version choreographed by French choreographer and newly appointed artistic director Medhi Walerski. Highly favorable reviews from British Columbia found the work reflected Walerski's time as a dancer with Paris Opera Ballet and the uber contemporary Nederlands Dans Theater (NDT), particularly in the black and white color palette. The Soraya, Cal State University Northridge, 18111 Nordhoff St., Northridge; Sat., Feb. 29, 8 p.m., Sun., March 1, 3 p.m., \$39-\$94. <https://www.thesoraya.org>.



Brandon Alley & Emily Chessa in Ballet BC's "Romeo & Juliet." Photo by Michael Slobodian.

4. When the heart wants what it wants #2

Another tragic love story ballet this week as choreographer Alexei Ratmanský unveils his latest for **American Ballet Theatre** the world premiere *Of Love and Rage*. Derived from a first century Greek novel, the plot centers on a woman who realizes her beauty, stealthily backed by her brains, are her only power and makes use of both in a story rife with love, betrayal, forgiveness and all the familiar ballet emotions that strongly suggests it won't end "happily ever after." Ratmanský has provocatively chosen music by Aram Khachaturian who provided the sweeping score for the ballet *Spartacus*. An ABT visit is always a chance to see beautiful dancers and scheduled casting is at the website. Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa; Thurs.-Fri., March 5-6, 7:30 p.m., Sat., March 7, 2 & 7:30 p.m., Sun., March 8, 1 p.m., \$29-\$189. <https://scfta.org/>.



Catherine Hurlin and Aran Bell in American Ballet Theatre's "Of Love and Rage." Photo by Erin Baiano.

3. Schoolhouse tap

Tap dancing gained a MacArthur "genius" award when one was bestowed on Michelle Dorrance.

The exuberant Dorrance has become the “it” girl of today’s tap dance. She arrives with *SOUNDspace*, originally developed for her **Dorrance Dance** as a site-specific tap performance in New York City’s St. Mark’s Church. The event is presented by USC’s Visions and Voices which has made a mark bringing innovative performance like Dorrance to town. USC Bovard Auditorium, 3551 Trousdale Pkwy., University Park; Wed., March 4, 7:30 p.m., free with reservation at http://visionsandvoices.usc.edu/eventdetails/?event_id=30335505890250.



Dorrance Dance. Photo courtesy of the artists.

2. Racial strides in ballet steps

When the ballet *Agon* premiered in 1957 with African American Arthur Mitchell partnering white ballerina Diana Adams in a central pas de deux, the barrier-breaking integrated pairing was highly controversial, yet choreographer George Balanchine resisted pressure to recast Mitchell. Photos of that Mitchell/Adams pairing became iconic and the controversy faded over the decades leaving the ballet to join other Balanchine masterpieces on its considerable merits. Not every ballet company can perform *Agon* or other Balanchine ballets without permission from the Balanchine Trust and the presence of a repetiteur who ensures the quality of the casting and performance. Colleen Neary was personally selected by Balanchine as a repetiteur to stage ballets like *Agon* which she has done for American Ballet Theater, Mariinsky Ballet, Stuttgart Ballet and L.A.’s own **Los Angeles Ballet** where she is co-artistic director. In the second offering of LAB’s 2019-2020 season, *Agon* joins two other Balanchine touchstone ballets *Concerto Barocco* set to Bach and *Apollo*, which like *Agon*, has music by composer Igor Stravinsky. The Broad Stage, 1310 11th St., Santa Monica; Wed.-Thurs., Feb. 26-27, 7:30 p.m., Fri., Feb. 28, 6 p.m., \$68-\$114. <https://losangelesballet.org/balanchine-black-and-white>.



Los Angeles Ballet. Photo by Reed Hutchinson.

1. They came, they hoped, they persevered

Last year, Gema Sandoval and her **Danza Floricanto/USA** unveiled *Immigrant Stories, An American Journey*. The product of two years of effort to develop and refine the equivalent of danced short stories conveying the individual yet interwoven stories of the immigrant experience. If anything, the atmosphere around the discussion of immigration has soured even more than at its premiere a year ago. The work and its dozen hopeful tales human of hope and perseverance returns at a time in sore need of such optimism. Rosenthal Theatre, Inner City Arts, 720 Kohler St., downtown; Sat., February 29, 8 p.m., Sun., March 1, 5 p.m., \$20 pre-sale, \$25 at door. <http://www.danzafloricantousa.org/store.php>.

Other dance of note:

What once was a bookstore—a flagship, multi-story Barnes and Noble—is now a forlorn empty storefront on the Santa Monica Promenade, but for one night it comes to life again, this time as a public art space. **Donna Sternberg & Dancers** joined by choreographer/dancer **Linda Lack** provide live movement in the windows while artist Inksap brings live painting to the scene. Video artists Michael J. Masucci and Kate Johnson of EZTVMuseum contribute live streaming with video monitors capturing it all. (empty) Barnes & Noble, Wilshire Blvd. at Third Street Promenade, Santa Monica; Sat., Feb. 29, 7 p.m., free. <https://dsdancers.com>.



Linda Lack. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Last chance to see Benjamin Millepied's revisited *I fall, I flow, I melt* for **L.A. Dance Project**. Originally premiered in January 2019, these performances offer a second look at Millepied's choreography and an always welcome chance to appreciate LADP's excellent dancers. Details at <http://ladanceproject.org/>. L.A. Dance Project Studios, 2245 E. Washington Blvd., downtown; Wed.-Sat., Feb. 26-29, 8 p.m., \$45. <https://www.artful.ly/store/events/1939>.



LA Dance Project in "I fall, I flow, I melt." Photo by Daniel Beres.

Spectrum—Dance in LA is free performance presented by **Deborah Brockus** showcasing a range of dance styles and professional performers as well as some students. Free, but donations are welcome. Madrid Theater, 21622 Sherman Way, Canoga Park; Fri., Feb. 28, 8:30 p.m., Sat., Feb. 29, 8 p.m., Sun., March 1, 7 p.m., free, but donations appreciated. http://www.brockusproject.org/brockusproject.org/Spectrum_Show.html.

Presented by the **Flamenco District**, *El Dia de Andalucia* welcomes dancers Manuel Gutierrez, Vanessa Albalos, Tiana Alvarez, Marcela Aguayo, Vivian Bruckman, and Claudia Flores. Their footwork is backed by guitarist Andres Vadin, singer Jose Cortes, and percussionist Diego (El Negro) Alvarez. Gallery 800, 5108 Lankershim Blvd., No.Hollywood; Fri., Feb. 28, 8 p.m., \$30 in advance, \$35 at door. <https://flamencodistrict.com/>, <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/flamenco-district-tickets-93131886981>.



Vanessa Albalos. Photo by Bruce Biesenz.

Under the banner **Theater of the Mind**, this potpourri of dance, theater, music and opera showcases creators and performers who also happen to be psychotherapists. El Portal Theatre, 5269 Lankershim Blvd., No. Hollywood; Sat., Feb. 29, 7:30 p.m., \$25. <https://elportaltheatre.com/theatreofthemind.html>.



Hannah Krafcik & Emily Jones. Photo by Intisar-Abioto.

Hannah Krafcik and **Emily Jones** live, dance, and collaborate in Portland, Oregon. **Zena Bibler** and **Darrian O'Reilly** live, dance, and collaborate in L.A. The products of each collaboration share the stage in *deux*. The Bibler/O'Reilly contribution is *Figure of Space: There Must Be More Than Good and Evil*. Krafcik/Jones offer *switch (a work in progress)*. Pieter, 420 W. Avenue 30, Glassell Park; Sat., Feb. 29, 8:30 p.m., non-monetary donation to free bar or free boutique. <https://pieterpasd.com>.

Continuing their efforts to demystify dance with performances in unconventional spaces, choreographer Benita Bike and the dancers of **Benita Bike's DanceArt** bring their *Explore Dance* program to this new theater. Dancers include Liza Barskaya, Sarah Gertler, Mikensie Johnson, Clare Kiklowicz, and Trudy Niess. L.A. Mission College, AMP Theater, 13356 Eldridge Ave., Sylmar; Thurs., Feb. 27, 7 p.m., free. <http://www.danceart.org/>.



Benita Bike's DanceArt. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Presented over three non-sequential days at three different public spaces, *The Quaking Place* promises an immersive, collaborative exploration of relationships that, when gradually augmented, verge on or edge into the parasitic. In choreographer/director Erin Reynolds MFA endeavor, dancers move in publicly inhabited spaces where experience too often is filtered through cell phones and technology. Several faculty members collaborated with Reynolds in this ambitious project. Fourth Friday on Fourth, Fourth St. from Temple to Cherry, Long Beach; Fri., Feb. 28, 7:30 p.m., free. Also at The Farmers Market, 5000 E. Spring St., Long Beach; Sun., March 15, 11:30 a.m., free. Also at SteelCraft, 3768 Long Beach Blvd., Long Beach, Thurs., March 19, free. <http://www.csulb.edu/dance>.



Dances of Protest. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Choreographer **Mallory Fabian** accepted an invitation to bring her skills to this state university's dance students. While there, Fabian created a new work that is part of the program *Dances of Protest*. Info at <http://www.calstatela.edu/al/theatre-and-dance/dances-protest>. Cal State University Los Angeles, State Playhouse, 5151 State University Dr., E.L.A.; Thurs.-Fri., Feb. 27-28, 7:30 p.m., Sat., Feb. 29, 2 p.m., \$12, \$10 students & seniors. <https://web.ovationtix.com/trs/cal/34675>.

Just in case there are not yet enough interpretations, director/composer Mat Sweeney and creative producer Sebastian Peters-Lazaro bring the talents of their eclectic performance ensemble **Four Larks** to bear on Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*. The troupe has drawn high praise and enthusiastic audiences for its ongoing partnership with the L.A. Chamber Orchestra and was last seen conducting an immersive excursion through the afterlife with the Getty Villa environs standing in for ancient underworld in *Katabasis*. This new project draws on choreography and set design by Sebastian Peters-Lazaro with a dozen performers who double as musicians. The text and libretto from Sweeney promises a cautionary consideration of modern technology lurking in Shelley's classic tale. The Wallis, Lovelace Theater, 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills; opened Wed., Feb. 12, 8 p.m., then Tues.-Fri., 8 p.m., Sat., 2:30 & 8 p.m., Sun., 2:30 & 7:30 p.m., thru March 1, \$60. <https://thewallis.org/Frankenstein>.



Four Larks' "Frankenstein." Photo courtesy of the artists.

With inspiration drawn from August Strindberg's *A Dream Play*, Caryl Churchill's adaptation, and the poems of Anne Sexton, the **Wallis Studio Ensemble** and choreographer Madeleine Dahm unveil their new physical theatre work *Lucid*. Although developed under the auspices of the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, this event is at another theater. Hudson Theatre Mainstage, 6539 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood; opens Fri.-Sat., Feb. 28-29, 8 p.m., Sun., March 1, 3 p.m., \$20. <https://thewallis.org/>.



Cirque du Soleil's "Volta." Photo courtesy of the artists.

In its 41st and latest endeavor *Volta*, **Cirque Du Soleil** spotlights bicycle street sports and acrobatics associated with the world of BMX including a full-blown BMX park for what is billed as a "breath-taking finale of non-stop acrobatics on wheels." The action will fill the signature Big Top here before moving to Orange county. **Dodger Stadium**, 1000 Vin Scully Ave., Elysian Park;

Tues. thru Sun., March 8, various dates, times & ticket pricess at <https://cirk.me/VOLTA>. Orange County Fair & Event Center, 88 Fair Dr., Costa Mesa; Wed., March 18 to Sun., April 19, various dates, times & ticket prices at <https://cirk.me/VOLTA>.

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