Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Are We There Yet?

Ann Haskins · Wednesday, February 3rd, 2021

Operas learn to dance, week 3 of global dance films, new music with new dance, more dance films, plus online encores, where to submit dance videos, where to take online dance classes, and more SoCal dance this week.

Author's note: Many of the dance events and classes rounded up below are free with donations encouraged. Please consider the money saved on transportation, paying for parking, a performance ticket, and the psychological costs of traffic when commuting to a live show. The companies and teachers will welcome this support to keep dancers dancing.

This Week

Beethoven in jail

Choreographer **Suchi Branfman** has a long-history and burnished reputation for her work with and about the incarcerated. She and three dancers join forces with the online indie opera company **Heartbeat Opera** and over a hundred incarcerated singers from six prison choirs for *Breathing Free.* Subtitled *a visual album,* the nine videos draw on sources as varied as Beethoven's *Fidelio,* traditional spirituals, Harry T. Burleigh, Florence Price, Langston Hughes, Anthony Davis and Thulani Davis. The West Coast premiere of this ambitious venture is presented by The Broad Stage and each performance offers a pre-performance conversation with an expert panel with Branfman participating on Feb. 10. Wed. & Sat., Feb. 10 & 13, 7 p.m., $10-$75. The Broad Stage.

Breathing Free. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Dancing to a Pulitzer

Chris Emile is justifiably credited as both choreographer and assistant director in **LA Opera/On Now**'s latest *Prism* from Pulitzer prize-winning composer Ellen Reid and librettist Roxie Perkins. Dancers Charbel Rohayem Gigi Todisco Tatiana Barber and Emile provide a movement component to the choral contributions in this 82-minute opera, a mesmerizing, dark dramatization of an emotion struggle and vocal duel/duet between a mother and her sequestered daughter. Thru Mon., Feb. 8, 11:59 p.m., free (donations encouraged) with reservation at LA Opera.

LA Opera On Now's "Prism." Photo courtesy of the artists,

Three viewpoints, one topic

Street dancer **Drew Dollaz**, spoken-word artist Marc Bamuthi Joseph, and composer Bernard Roumain blend live performance and short films for *The Just and the Blind*, a consideration of racial profiling and the prison-industrial complex. Commissioned by Carnegie Hall and presented by USC's Visions and Voices, it is live via zoom on Tue., Feb. 9, 5:30 p.m. Free with reservation at Visions and Voices.

Marc Bamuthi Joseph, Drew Dollaz, and Bernard Roumain. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Dance for a pandemic attention span

After launching the first of the drive-in live dance performances last spring, **Jacob Jonas The Company** has been busy filming short dance films at locations all over the world. With support from three theaters, The Wallis and The Soraya in SoCal and The Harris in Chicago, Jonas and his dancers worked with more than 150 artists all over the globe to produce 15 dance films for the series, ***Films.Dance***. For 15 weeks that started January 25, one film per week debuts on Mondays and continues until May 3. The films screen for free. The week 3 addition brings *Pássaro Distante* from Brasil with Luís Fernando, Jovani Furlan, Luanna Gondim and Maitê Nunes who reunite in their hometown of Joinville, Brazil and dance together as a shadow of one another. Cassi Abranches choreographed. This film joins *Kaduna,* filmed in Nigeria and following brothers and self-taught dancers Victory and Marvel Ebinum, and *Toke* capturing Danish-born dancer Toke Broni Strandby in London locales with choreography by Stuart Shugg. Mon., 9 a.m., free. New additions each Monday to May 3. Info on the full line-up of 15 films and free subscriptions at Films.Dance, The Wallis, The Soraya.

Films.Dance. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Online Encores

Live music, virtual dance

Dance continues to be part of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra's 20-21 online season, this week with dancer/choreographer **Shauna Davis** in the premiere of composer/musician Derrick Spiva Jr.'s two part work *Mind The Rhythm*. LACO's music director Jaime Martin conducts. A 6 p.m. pre-performance conversation includes Davis and the composer. Fri. Jan. 29, 6:30 p.m., Link to performance and to register for pre-performance discussion at https://www.laco.org/close-quarters/

Shauna Davis. Photo by Chris Emile

Taking to the air(waves)

The Association of Performing Arts Professionals (APAP) annually gathers dance companies and other performing arts organizations for a convention with workshops and panels in addition to live performances showcasing its members' work that can lead to bookings and tours. This year, Covid-19 has shifted the event online, including the performances. The SoCal aerial company **Luminario Ballet** has posted links to its three APAP showcase performances and also announced that later this month it shoots a dance film (more on that when the film is done). Links to the three APAP performances and more Luminario. Free, YouTube.

Luminario Ballet. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Mask breathing

Since March when the scheduled premiere of her first full length contemporary ballet *Memoryhouse* was cancelled with the statewide coronavirus shutdown, choreographer Melissa Barak and her contemporary **Barak Ballet** shifted online with the premiere of *Breathe In,* a short ballet filmed at the grounds at the Holocaust Museum in what formerly was known as Pan Pacific Park in the Fairfax district. The film features Peter Chursin with Andrew Brader, Lucia Connolly, Jessica Gadzinski, Chasen Greenwood, Stephanie Kim, and with choreography by Barak. Some of the films are free at https://barakballet.org/and https://www.instagram.com/barakballet/

Barak Ballet. Photo courtesy of the artists.

A show of force

One of the most powerful filmed efforts from last year remains painfully true as military veterans who now are first responders confront what it means to be a warrior on the front lines of a pandemic. In *This is Me – Letters from the Front Lines*, the vets gymnastically inhabit a world of pipes and moving structures while articulating the personal and professional realities of being on the front line of Covid-19. Since 2016 when artistic director Jacques Heim and **Diavolo Architecture in Motion** launched their **Veterans Project**, more than 500 SoCal veterans have participated in the company's gymnastic approach to movement to restore physical, mental and emotional strengths. Along the way, the project developed stunning performance works, one of which was part of Diavolo's day-long 25th anniversary celebration at the Soroya which hosted this event as part of the theater's *Fridays at 4* series. The powerful film bears multiple viewing as it continues on the Diavolo website along with other filmed Diavolo performances. https://www.diavolo.org/thisismefilm

Diavolo Veterans Project. Photo by George Simian.

Locking it up

Early on, the street dance troupe **Versa-Style Dance Company** seemed to take naturally to online streaming of performances and classes. It's most recent, *Ending The Year With Hope*, is online. The company also has a segment filmed at the beach as part of the Music Center series. The company's YouTube channel hosts performance videos and videos on a range of life-skills subjects geared to young adults, but with pointers for all ages. Info at https://versastyledance.org/. Videos on YouTube and https://versastyledance.org/media/

Versa-Style Dance. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Post-grad dancing

Performances by Santa Monica College's two dance resident dance **Synapse Contemporary Dance Theater** and **Global Motion World Dance Company** stream for free at SMC.

Synapse Contemporary Dance Theater. Photo courtesy of the artists.

The past comes present

Among the subtle and not so subtle changes of new management by the LA Phil, what used to be the Ford Theater is now The Ford and while the theatre itself remains closed, four digital series

were announced through the end of the year. A quartet of festivals was mostly about music, but included *Movement / Matters* focused on Black street and club dance. Co-curator Tyree Boyd-Pates surveys dance from TV's *Soul Train* to the present as a source of connection, care, power and potential. Lula Washington is among the notables participating in this decade by decade exploration. Other Ford efforts showcasing dance include the Saturday morning family classes and videos of past concert performances that reflect how the beloved al fresco venue functioned as an informal summer dance festival. Those past performances capture the energy and diversity in SoCal dance including contemporary from Lula Washington Dance Theatre, street dance from Versa-Style Dance, Brazilian from Viver Brasil, plus traditional and contemporary folkloric dance from Grandeza Mexicano Folk Ballet Company, Pacifico Dance Company, the LA Phil's exploration of Tovaangar Today with dancer Ba'ac Garcia, and contemporary South Asian, Bollywood and Bhangra dance from Achinta S. McDaniel and her Blue13. All free. Complete calendar and information at The Ford.

Lula Washington Dance Theatre. Photo courtesy of the artists.

An international dozen

A dozen dancers working remotely from three continents developed a series of short videos presented by **Nancy Evans Dance Theatre** under the banner *The Channels*. The contributors include Karina Francis Jones and Riki Campos Freire, Jenn Logan and Marcos Novais, Jen Hunter and Irupé Sarmiento, Noel Dilworth and Jiwon Doede, Katrina Amerine and Shori Yamamoto, Ashleigh Doede and Nikolaos Doede. Nancy Evans Dance Theatre

Nancy Evans Dance Theatre. Photo by Shana Skelton.

House dancing

Pasadena's iconic Gamble House was the site for a collaboration with dancers from **Lineage** for this year's ArtNight. The performance, appropriately called *Lineage x Gable House*, streams for free for a limited period. The pandemic interrupted the company's planned move into a new facility, but the studio and performance space are completed although for now classes and performance must continue online. Lineage.

Lineage Dance. Photo courtesy of the artists.

More Taylor

Choreographer **Micaela Taylor** pairs with TL Collective dancer **Matt Luck** in *Love Struck*, streaming on FLTPK, the online streaming service from choreographer Trey McIntyre. Subscription is a monthly pledge of $1 to $9 to support this and other films. Access to the service's website varies with the level of pledged support starting at $2 per month. Patreon

Micaela Taylor. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Unexpected curriculum addition

The challenges of creating dance while observing social distancing and other Covid–19 safety protocols is a new curriculum addition for dance departments as well as dance companies. Under the direction of assistant professor Becca Lemme, Cal State University Long Beach dance students

observed strict protocols in creating two different programs of dances for its live-streamed *Fall Dance Festival*. Those performances and more are now available on CSULB's YouTube Channel. Free at https://www.youtube.com/user/CSULBDance

CSULB Fall Dance Concert. Photo by Gregory RR Crosby.

Alone with others watching

The site specific performance ensemble **Heidi Duckler Dance** continues to celebrate HDD's 35th anniversary with an array of films including two of HDD's signature site specific performances. At the outset of the March 2020 pandemic sequestering, Duckler based *The Chandelier* on a work by Brazilian author Clarice Lispector about a woman experiencing isolation and trying to connect. Performers include Himerria Wortham, Rafael Quintas, Myles Lavallee, Nicole Flores, Maureen Asic, Magdalena Edwards, Jessica Emmanuel, Jaeme Velez, David Guerra, and Paula Rebelo. Free online at Vimeo. For *What Remains*, a tale of life behind the iron curtain, Duckler took inspiration from the travails of *Orpheus and Eurydice* as well as from East German author Christa Wolf's short story about being under surveillance by the Stasi police. Staged in the garden of a museum dedicated to the cold war, the work was presented in conjunction with the museum's exhibit *The Medea Insurrection: Radical Women Artists Behind the Iron Curtain*. The online screening includes a discussion with the museum's chief curator Joes Segal. Wende Museum. Info on these and more films at https://heididuckler.org/reelsfilms/.

Heidi Duckler Dance. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Dancing around LA

In the absence of touring companies inside its theaters, the Music Center is giving a little love and attention to LA's dance companies. Among the recent additions look for movement artist **Brianna Mims** performing her original choreography set in Leimert Park as part of *The Music Center's For The Love Of L.A.* Mims' contribution joins six performances by other SoCal companies set around L.A. **Versa-Style Dance Company** sent its street dancers to the beach, folkloric troupe **Pacifico Dance Company** had nine dancers at different locations representing different areas of Mexico, the tap group **Syncopated Ladies** took an existing routine to a rooftop, five members of Malathi Iyengar's **Rangoli Dance Company** premiered a work celebrating a South Asian goddess, Albertossy Espinoza's **LA Fusion Dance Theater** offered a Flamenco fusion duet, and Pat Taylor's **Jazz Antiqua Dance & Music Ensemble** sent its dancers in parks, alleys, an empty business street, and other sites spread for their solos. After their premiere on Instagram, all the films now are available for viewing at Music Center.

Versa-Style Dance. Photo courtesy of the artists.

The Moms have it

The same week that memorialized the late civil rights leader congressman John Lewis was the week Emmett Till would have been 79 years old had he not been lynched at age 14 because of his skin. In 2010, Kevin Spicer curated *The Emmett Till Project* at Highways Performance Space. Choreographer Pat Taylor's contribution *A Kindred Woe* receives a timely encore. The work focuses on how mothers whose children have been murdered "take on the mantle" in the fight against racism and justice. The **JazzAntiqua Dance and Music Ensemble** performers include Terrice Banks Tillmon, Keisha Clark-Booth, Rayne Duronslet, Kacy Keys and Shari Washington

Rhone. http://www.jazzantiqua.org/javideoclips.html and https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=jazz+antiqua+dance+ensemble

JazzAntiqua Dance & Music Ensemble. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Silver screen shifting

After discovering their admiration for the others work was mutual, **LA Contemporary Dance Company** and Vitamin String Quartet's planned collaboration for a live performance was put on hold by the pandemic shutdown. The effort took a different turn to film, two films so far with the first now streaming. That initial release, *The Box*, managed to adhere to CDC guidelines while putting two dancers (Jamila Glass and Angel Tyson) and four musicians (Elizabeth Baba, Amanda Lo, Filip Pogády, Caleigh Drane) in the historic Heritage Square Museum. The roughly three-minute film streams on YouTube. Now a second collaboration has been added with *Blinding Light* with dancers Christian Beasley, Hyosun Choi, Jamila Glass, Nicole Hagen, Tess Hewlett, Malachi Middleton, JM Rodriguez, Ryan Ruiz, and Angel Tyson. An earlier LACDC collaboration, this time with filmmaker Nathan Kim continues to stream. The seven-minute film *BLINK*, was choreographed by artistic director Genevieve Carson in collaboration with the LACDC dancers. An official selection in the Hollyshorts Film Festival 2019, Cucalorus Festival 2019, and the San Francisco Dance Film Festival 2019, BLINK features dancer Hyosun Choi with Christian Beasley, Kate Coleman, Tess Hewlett, Ryan Ruiz, Drea Sobke, and Tiffany Sweat. The two films and information on other LACDC virtual programming on their website and https://vimeo.com/showcase/7051881

LA Contemporary Dance Company. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Feel like screaming?

Originally developed as a stage piece by choreographer Sophia and the dancers of **Iris Company**, the creators in 2018 presciently reworked *Screaming Shapes!* into a film. After a year on the festival circuit including SoCal's Dance Camera West, the company has released the work online. The performers include Bryanna Brock, Hyosun Choi, Cat Cogliandro, Casey Gonzalez, Kristen Holleyman, Amanda MacLeod, Joan H. Padeo, Shane Raiford, and Jamal Wade. Iris Company.

Iris Company. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Multi-screens

Adding to its trove of streaming options, **Viver Brasil** adds a weekly spotlight on past performances. The Afro-Brazilian dance and live music ensemble offer journeys to Salvador, Bahia to explore royal orixá dances, high-flying capoeira, and samba from a Bahian Carnaval. Current and past spotlight events now available. Viver Brasil also was among the SoCal artists selected for KCET's *Southland Sessions*, reworking its popular family show *Celebrating Samba* for the small screen with company members performing from their homes. But through the power of Afro-Brazilian dance and live music they promise a cultural journey to Salvador, Bahia to explore royal orixá dances, high-flying capoeira, and samba from a Bahian Carnaval. Streaming at KCET.

Viver Brasil. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Is it a question?

Filmed during the initial Covid–19 shutdown, Emily Mast and Yehuda Duenyas' project *HOW ARE WE*, collected 15 solos, each 90-seconds including from LA choreographers. The possibilities of a plant, the bed sheets, or the corner of a room are among the starting points. Armed with a tennis racket, Carlon contributed *Anesthetized*, admitting that he wanted a socially acceptable reason to scream or grunt like Serena Williams or John McEnroe without looking like nut. Other contributors include Shannon Hafez, Jessica Emmanuel, Stacy Dawson Stearns, Jenny Marytai Liu, Constance Hockaday & Faye Driscoll, Barnett Cohen, Hana Van Der Kolk, Darrian O'Reilly, David Arian Freeland Jr., Heyward Bracey, Mireya Lucio, Dorothy Dubrule, Terrence Luke Johnson, and Mast & Duenyas. Info at How Are We. Stream on Vimeo.

Carlon. Photo courtesy of the artists.

More in the lunchbox

In June, **Dohee Lee'**s scheduled REDCAT performance was cancelled. The venue hopes one day to reschedule a live performance. In the meanwhile, the Korean artist whose skills span dance, drumming, singing and musical composition joins the line-up of prior dance performances from artists including **Austyn Rich**, **Genna Moroni**, **Tzong-Han Wu**, and **Rosanna Gamson/World Wide**. Info at https://www.redcat.org/. Videos at Instagram Channel.

Dohee Lee. Photo by Pak Han.

Moving Offstage

The *Music Center Offstage* continues to stream new and encore video clips and performances from Swing 2020, Cuba's Malpaso Dance Company, Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch, Jung Im Lee Korean Dance Academy, Kayamanan Ng Lahi Philippine Folk Arts, Infinite Flow, and Spotlight classical and non-classical dance finalists Jacob Jovanni Alvarado, Ashley Lew, Maya Alvarez-Coyne and Bergundi Loyd. https://www.musiccenter.org/tmc-offstage/.

Ballet Hispanico. Photo by Paula Lobo.

When one was not enough

Instead of its usual annual live performances from Black and Latinx choreographers at the Bootleg Theater, the **BlakTinx Dance Festival** returned with a viral format in late June. For those who missed that live stream of Dancing on the Edge, the show now continues on-line in four parts with works from Nancy Rivera Gomez, Shantel Ureña, Anthony Aceves, Bernard Brown, Joshua Estrada-Romero, Keilah Lomotey, Michelle Funderburk, Primera Generación, Vannia Ibargüen, Marina Magalhães, Regina Ferguson, Rubi Morales, Amber Morales, Alan Perez, Dorcas Román, Yarrow Perea, Andrea Ordaz, Eluza Santos, Briseyda Zárate, and Sadie Yarrington. With many of the works recently created, the pandemic and the streets were subjects and five pieces from earlier festivals that focused on Black Lives Matter were last minute additions. More info at https://www.blaktinafestival.com/. View all four programs on YouTube.

BlakTinx. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Knock twice & tell them Jacob sent you

Reminiscent of what one did to enter a speakeasy in the 1920s or a Cold War spy meet-up, a select, paying audience was given the address of a Santa Monica airport parking lot with strict instructions on arriving in their cars, remaining in the cars wearing face masks, and turning on their headlights

when cued. In perhaps the first “drive in” dance event, Jacob Jonas and his eponymous **Jacob Jonas The Company** performed *Parked* with those vehicles encircling the “stage,” their headlights illuminating the socially spaced dancers performing to live music by Anibal Sandoval. The one-night only event was filmed by Ivan Cash and Daniel Addelson. With the five minute final cut covering interviews with the choreographer and dancers, the actual performance footage is brief, but if the cars flashing their headlights at bows was a kind of applause, the experiment garnered a vehicular standing ovation from the audience. Hopefully, the performance itself will have a separate streaming life. Info at http://jacobjonas.com/. Film on Vimeo.

Jacob Jonas The Company. Photo courtesy of the artists.

From the streets to the sheets

This past November, **Bobbi Jene Smith** and Or Schraiber were performing live in a downtown parking lot as part of LA Dance Project’s *Drive-in Dance* series. The former Batsheva dancers end the year with the streaming release of *Aviva*, a film directed by Boaz Yakin and choreographed by Smith. She and Schreiber join dancers Zina Zinchenko and Tyler Phillips to portray different aspects of two lovers who move from an online to in-person romance, bringing along other sides of their persona. An official selection of the 2020 SXSW Film Festival, the reviews of the theater release promise an art film approach to online dating, courtship, frequently unclothed bodies, plus dancing in the streets and sheets. Streaming info at https://strandreleasing.com/films/aviva/.

Aviva. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Platforms to Submit Video Dance

Dare Dancing

With cautions about staying safe while filming, organizers Sarah Elgart and Cultural Weekly announced round 4 of *Dare to Dance in Public* with the theme of *Pandemania*, meaning a hyper energized state. Info on the judges, prior winners, plus rules and regulations for submission at Dare to Dance in Public Film Festival. The group’s other film endeavor Six Foot Dances is still accepting one-minute films. Current submissions on Dare to Dance in Public.

Dare to Dance. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Online Dance Classes

Pandemic exhaustion? Get thee to a dance class!

On-line dance classes continue on zoom, instagram and other on-line platforms, many classes free, low cost or suggesting a donation. One central, constantly updated source on dance classes and in-depth reporting on SoCal dance, LA Dance Chronicle lists on-line dance classes including any cost and contact info. Grab a chair or clear off a corner of the room and use this time to dance. LA Dance Chronicle

Dance classes listed on LA Dance Chronicle.

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