Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Can We Breathe Yet?

Ann Haskins · Wednesday, November 11th, 2020

Live drive-in dance continues in a downtown parking lot, a tribute to a dance legend concludes from Westwood, short dance films make a festival, a modern dance company revisits past performances, new contemporary dance with a Turkish flair, university dancers learn new techniques downtown and in Long Beach, plus encore streaming, where to submit dance videos, where to take online dance classes, and more SoCal dance this week.

Binge watching

Two programs totaling 34 selections stream over two days as the 4th annual **LA Dance Shorts Film Festival** moves from the theater to the internet. Organizers Nicole Manoochehri and Olivia Mia Orozco again assembled two programs with a mix of local, national and international contributions that include representation from several LA choreographers turned directors. Each festival program runs about 90 minutes and is available for 24 hours starting at midnight. On Friday, watch films directed by locals Heidi Duckler (Heidi Duckler Dance) and Melissa Barak (Barak Ballet), and Massimiliano Bomba who recruited CalArts dance students for his *Teorema*. Saturday includes Orange County-based Alyssa Thompson's *Collective Loss*. This fest includes a zoom Q&A on Saturday afternoon with filmmakers from the Friday program and on Sunday at 2 p.m. with directors of Saturday's films. The festival is free, but support can be offered through the purchase of a festival t-shirt. More info at LA Dance Shorts Film Festival. Screenings on Fri. & Sat., Nov. 13 & 14, 12:00 am to 11:59 pm., Zoom filmmaker Q&A on Sat. & Sun. 2 p.m., all events free. Register through Eventbrite.

Barak Ballet's "Breathe In" in LA Dance Shorts Film Festival. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Westwood channeling from New York

Continuing its 20th anniversary, New York-based **Ronald K. Brown/EVIDENCE** partners with CAP UCLA for an online, pre-recorded screening of choreographer Ronald K. Brown's *Grace@20*. Dedicated to the late choreographer Alvin Ailey and originally premiered by Ailey's company in 1999, the work draws on music from Duke Ellington, Roy Davis and Fela Anikulapo Kuti to tell the story of a goddess' arrival on earth to spread grace to humans. Presented as part of CAP UCLA's dance series, the online performance is followed by a live discussion with the choreographer. Related events include an online community class and a streamed community conversation with the choreographer and guests focused on the company's aesthetic and issues raised by the performance of *Grace*. Performance on Thurs. Nov. 12, 7 p.m. PST, free. Community

class (all levels welcome) on Fri., Nov. 13, 3 p.m., PST, free. Community conversation on Sat., Nov. 14, 3 p.m., free. Information and access at CAP UCLA.

Ronald K. Brown/Evidence. Photo by Julieta Cervantes

A shimmer

The contemporary **Kybele Dance Theater** offers artistic director Seda Aybay's *Yakamoz* in two live, online performances. The title doesn't seem to have a direct translation into English, though the word "sparkle" showed up most in an internet search. In the Turkish language "yakamoz" appears to describe the effect of moonlight shining on a body of water like the sea or an ocean. Performers include Marii Kawabata, Nick Albuja, Karlo Ramirez, Kennedy Blue, and Aybay. Sat., Nov. 14, 6 & 8 pm PST, $5. Register for 6 pm PST Zoom performance. Register for 8pm PST Zoom performance.

Kybele Dance Theater. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Moving online

Known for bring modern dance to unconventional venues like senior centers, museums, and parks, **Benita Bike's Dance Art** moves online with videos of two concert performances with a chance for audience input and questions. The Zoom performance is free with registration. Sat., Nov. 14, 4 pm, free with registration at Dance Art.

Benita Bike's DanceArt Company. Photo courtesy of the audience.

Something new

New works and portions of masterworks are programmed for *A/Part To/Gather: New Works*, the fall dance program livestreamed from USC's **Kaufman School of Dance**. Artist-in-residence Hope Boykin who recently retired after 20 years with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre contributes one of the premieres. A second premiere, an exploration of diverse jazz styles, comes from Saleemah E Knight, a founding faculty member whose draws on her interdisciplinary concert and commercial background. Moncell Durden and Francesca Harper also offer new works. The dancers are drawn from the school's BFA students. Thurs., Nov. 12, 5:30 p.m., Fri., Nov. 13, 5 p.m., free. Reservation at Eventbrite.

USC's Benjamin Peralta; photo by Rose Eichenbaum.

Drive in dance

One of two alternating live performances offered by LA Dance Project's *Drive-In Dances* ended this past week, but the second, *The Betweens* with **Jermaine Spivey** and **Spenser Theberge**, continues. Spivey was guest faculty at the USC Kaufman School of Dance and known for his work with Crystal Pite where Theberge also was connected in addition to working with Spivey. LA Dance Project parking lot, 2245 E. Washington Blvd., downtown; thru Sun., Nov. 22, $100-$150 per car (top price includes a one-year LADP digital membership). Required Covid–19 safety protocols, other info, dates, and tickets at LA Dance Project.

Jermaine Spivey. 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 the live-streamed **Fall Dance Festival**. The pre-recorded performances draw on scores created in collaboration with different composers. Concert director Kaelie Osorio moderates two post-performance zoom Q&A session with each program's artists. Special arrangements include ASL interpreters and the live-stream has a separate link with audio description and closed captioning for audience members in need of those options. A complete list of choreographers scheduled for each evening at CSULB. Live stream on Fri., Nov. 13 & 20, 7 pm, free with a link for donations. YouTube.

CSULB Fall Dance Festival. Photo by Gregory RR Cosby.

Online Encores

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 includes mostly music, but one in November is focused on dance. The Saturday morning family classes include lots of dance and the past performances being streamed reflect how the beloved al fresco venue functioned as an informal summer dance festival. Those past performances reflect 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, and the LA Phil's exploration of *Tovaangar Today* with dancer Ba'ac Garcia. This Saturday (11 a.m.) offers a performance of contemporary South Asian, Bollywood and Bhangra dance from Achinta S. McDaniel and her **Blue13** that concludes with a lesson from McDaniel. All free. Complete calendar and information at The Ford.

Blue13 Dance Company. Photo by Anne Slattery.

Alone with others watching

The site specific performance ensemble **Heidi Duckler Dance** just wrapped up ten days of *The Quest*, each day taking audiences to ten sites throughout metro LA metro for live performances to celebrate HDD's 35th anniversary. *Quest* has concluded, but the company and Heidi Duckler's choreography can still be seen online in two different site specific performances. Just in time for the 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.

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, showcasing filmed performances from six SoCal companies. **Versa-Style Dance Company** sent its street dancers to the beach, folkloric troupe **Pacifico Dance Company**'s 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 around LA. for their solos. After their premiere on Instagram, all six films now are available for viewing at Music Center.

Versa-Style Dance. Photo courtesy of the artists.

A show of force

In what may prove a timely, if unnerving coincidence, military veterans are featured in a streamed film from Diavolo's Veterans Project exploring what it means to be a true warrior on the front lines. In *This is Me – Letters from the Front Lines*, military vets and first responders explore what it means to be on the front line. Since artistic director Jacques Heim and **Diavolo Architecture in Motion** launched their **Veterans Project** in 2016, 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. Info at https://www.thesoraya.org/.

Diavolo Veterans Project. Photo by George Simian.

Mask breathing

The scheduled premiere of choreographer Melissa Barak's first full length contemporary ballet *Memoryhouse* for her **Barak Ballet** was cancelled when Santa Monica's Broad Stage closed with the statewide coronavirus shutdown. On what would have been the closing night, **Barak Ballet** instead went 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. Also, there's an opportunity to sign up for the company's new YouTube channel. Info and streaming at https://barakballet.org/ and Facebook.

Barak Ballet. Photo by Djeneba Aduayom.

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.

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.

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. https://vimeo.com/441671503.

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

Locking it up

Early on, the street dance troupe **Versa-Style Dance Company** seemed to take naturally to online streaming including a tribute to Don Campbellock, the creator of the Locking dance style,and its

youth organization Versa-Style Next Generation unveil *Finding Creativity and Fun in Our Personal Space*. The troupe went to the beach for its contribution to the line up at the Music Center's gallery of videos from SoCal dance companies. Always more than just about the dancing, the troupe mentors its younger members to add college and a career to their dance moves. In the absence of live gatherings, the website now hosts informative and useful videos on a range of life-skills subjects. This week the ensemble announced the launch of its YouTube channel, adding to its social media presence. Videos and info at the Versa-Style website.

Versa-Style Dance. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Busy 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/. 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.

Online Dance Classes

Pandemic depression? 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.

https://www.ladancechronicle.com.

Dance classes listed on LA Dance Chronicle.

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