Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Dancing Like Ballet's Comeback Kid

Ann Haskins · Wednesday, April 11th, 2018

Contemporary dance on the Santa Monica pier, a tap festival's opening salvo downtown, a South African *Giselle* in Beverly Hills, ballet's phoenix in Santa Monica, and more SoCal dance this busy week.

5. Dancing gospel to Ella Fitzgerald

The always welcome **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater** arrives with its cache of polished, beautiful dancers. Starting Thursday, the company performs repertory programs, but the opening salvo is a low cost 60-minute lecture demonstration on Wednesday featuring debut choreography from company member Jamar Roberts titled *Members Don't Get Weary*, *Ella* from artistic director Robert Battle set to classic Ella Fitzgerald recordings, and the company's signature gospel-infused *Revelations* from company founder Alvin Ailey. The repertory programs all close with *Revelations* and overall include five west coast premieres. Thursday and Sunday reprise Roberts' new work, Battle's *In/Side*, and Twyla Tharp's *The Golden Section.* Friday and Saturday evenings include Talley Beatty's *Stack-Up*, Gustavo Ramirez Sansano's *Victoria*, and Battle's *Ella*. Saturday matinee has Billy Wilson's *The Winter in Lisbon*, Battle's *Mass* and *Ella.* Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa; Wed., April 18, 7:30 p.m., $19-$59. Thurs.-Fri., April 19-20, 7:30 p.m., Sat., April 21, 2 & 7:30 p.m., Sun., April 22, 1 p.m., $29-$139. http://scfta.org.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in "Members Don't Get Weary". Photo by Paul Kolnik.

4. South African *Giselle*

While Adolphe Adam's ballet score is referenced by composer Philip Miller, the music for South African choreographer **Dada Masilo**'s version of *Giselle*, involves African drums and vocals along with a cello, violin, and harp. Masilo who choreographed and stars, keeps the architecture of the plot with a young village girl seduced then betrayed by a man already betrothed, after she dies the girl is resurrected amid other similarly jilted ghosts. This version shifts the action from Europe to South Africa, foregoes toe shoes for bare feet, and recalibrates the theme from betrayal and forgiveness to betrayal and revenge. There is no credit for the other dancers or the company in the press material. The theater website cautions the show contains adult material and nudity. Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, Bram Goldsmith Theater, 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills; Thurs-Sat., April 12-14, 7:30 p.m., $45-$125. 310-746-4000. http://thewallis.org.

Dada Masilo. Photo courtesy of the artist.

3. Decoding the meaning

Four choreographers with distinctive viewpoints launch **Decode Explode**, a new series focusing on interdisciplinary movement-based works. With collaborators Michael Quinn and Damien Blaise, Caroline Haydon draws on her background in Butoh and as a multi-media artist to consider identity and altering perceptions of self in *Maya*. In her solo *STRIKING/LIGHT*, J. Alex Mathews raises questions about gender and sexuality with help from lighting designer Ric Zimmerman. In *Protest Dance/Women's March*, Grace Phelan + Company consider the female body and feminism in the world of #MeToo and #TimesUp. Writer/director Tamara Rosenblum and choreographer Chantal Cherry revisit a disturbed young woman involved with murdering her abusive parents in *Folie a Trois*. Highways Performance Space, 1651 18th St., Santa Monica; Sat.-Sun., April 13-14, 8:30 p.m., $20, $15 students & seniors. http://www.highwaysperformance.org.

DECODE EXPLODE's Caroline Haydon. Photo courtesy of the artist.

2. A fest at the ocean

Fans of live dance, dance on film, and folk who like to go to the beach will all find much to love as this year's **Dance Camera West Film Festival** adds **To the Sea: Dance Concerts on the Pier,** a live performance component curated by choreographer Jacob Jonas and his eponymous Jacob Jonas The Company. The film component begins Thursday with a screening of international short films at UCLA's Fowler Museum then shifts to Santa Monica's Laemmle Theaters. The live dance performances next Friday through Sunday are at the Santa Monica Pier. Announced local and visiting companies including Pilobolus, L. A. Conteporary Dance, Rubberlegz, Emily Kikta from New York City Ballet, the aptly named Seaweed Sisters, and Jonas' troupe. The pier performances are free and reservations are recommended. The film screenings are ticketed. Complete details, tickets and reservations at http://www.dancecamerawest.org. International short films at Fowler Museum, 308 Charles E. Young Dr. North, Westwood; Thurs., April 12, 8 p.m., $25. To the Sea: Dance Concerts on the Pier, Santa Monica Pier, 200 Santa Monica Pier A, Santa Monica; Fri.-Sun., April 13-15, 6:30 p.m., free with reservation. Laemmle Film Center, 1332 2nd St., Santa Monica; Fri., April 13, 8 p.m., Sat., April 14, noon & 3 p.m., Sun., April 15, noon, 1:30 p.m. & 3 p.m. $12. http://www.dancecamerawest.org/.

Concerts at the Pier"s Jacob Jonas The Company. Photo by Jacob Jonas.

1. They're back!! They're here!!

The story of **Dance Theatre of Harlem** reads like ballet's "comeback kid". Founded by Arthur Mitchell after he retired as the first African American member of New York City Ballet, DTH made its mark proving Mitchell was not an exception. DTH developed African American ballet dancers who danced classical ballet, became known for their mastery of George Balanchine's neo-classical style, and stretched the borders of ballet into realms of contemporary and street dance. Financial stresses forced the company to retrench for several years, suspending the professional company and continuing only its ballet school and training performances. In 2011, the

professional company returned. Now back in full stride with artistic director Virginia Johnson (who reigned as DTH's ballerina before founding *Pointe Magazine*), DTH stops off on its current international tour at two local venues. The program is more contemporary than classical with choreography from Robert Garland, Ulysses Dove and Darrell Grande Moultrie. The ranks of the company's technically superb dancers include many of those students DTH continued training during the performance hiatus and who were beautifully primed when DTH was ready for its comeback. Irvine Barclay Theatre, 4242 Campus Dr., Irvine; Wed., April 18, 8 p.m., $58-$68. http://thebarclay.org. Also at The Broad Stage, 1310 11th St., Santa Monica; Fri., April 20, 7:30 p.m., Sat., April 21, 2 & 7:30 p.m., $60-$115. http://thebroadstage.org/dancetheatreofharlem.

Dance Theatre of Harlem. Photo by François-Rousseau.

Other dance of note:

A *Special International Edition!* of the **Dance in Progress** series presents Neus Gil Cortes, the director of Nua Dance. Now based in the United Kingdom, the Spanish choreographer is this venue's first choreographic resident. Cortes has been working with local dancers during his three week residency and this is the first look. The evening also includes Yusha-Marie Sorzano whose roots are in Trinidad and Tobago; and also Wewolf comprised of Rauf Yasit from Germany and James Gregg from Oklahoma. Downtown Dance & Movement, 1144 S. Hope St., downtown; Fri., April 13, 8 p.m., $15. 213-335-3511, https://www.eventbrite.com/e/dance-in-progress-special-international-edition-tickets-44567805506.

Downtown Dance & Movement's Neus Gil Cortes. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Now in its fourth iteration, *TET4ERING* annually unites two L.A.-based contemporary companies that are sympatico despite different approaches to dance. Andrea Gise's describes her **DANCE AEGIS** as a multimedia and choreographic platform while Rebecca Lemme's **Acts of Matter** approaches dance as an exploration of humanity. What happens onstage is the result of each choreographer and company informing the work of the other. Live Arts Los Angeles, 4210 Panamint, Eagle Rock; Fri., April 13, 8:30 p.m., Sat., April 14, 6:30 & 9 p.m., $20 in advance, $25 at door; $15 student in advance, $20 student at door. https://tet4ering.brownpapertickets.com.

Acts of Matter. Photo by Kristie Khans.

Choreographer Hilary Thomas and her **Lineage Dance** have never shied away from tackling emotionally challenging subjects in honest, insightful and touching ways whether the topic was suicide or homelessness. In *Life After Death for the Living,* Thomas explores the journeys of three women grappling with finding new life after the death of a loved one. Lineage Performance Space, 89 S. Fair Oaks Ave., Pasadena; Sat., April 14, 8 p.m., Sun., April 15, 7 p.m., $20 in advance, $25 at door; $15 students & seniors in advance, $20 students & seniors at door. http://www.lineagepac.org.

Esther Baker-Taparga, Kirsten Davis, Bianca Medina, Odeya Nini, Wilfried Souly and Allison Wyper are respected, committed choreographers and dancers. They come together to consider how

to **Be Here Now**. Pieter, 420 W. Avenue 33, Lincoln Heights; Sat., April 14, 8:30 p.m., free with non-monetary donation to free bar or free boutique. https://pieterpasd.com.

Fans of tap dance can head downtown as the **Tap Fest Performance** features several spectacular tappers including Joseph Wiggan, Assata Madison, Melinda Sullivan, Steve Zee, and Sam Weber. The show kicks off Sunday's tap festival. Colburn School, Zipper Hall, 200 S. Grand Ave., downtown; Sat., April 14, 5:30 p.m., $10. Performance and Tap Fest details and tickets at **https://www.colburnschool.edu/calendar/events/tap-fest/.**

Graduate dance students unveil their work in the latest installment of UCLA's **Upstarts** series. Under the banner *Legacy*, this edition promises "narratives of empowerment, resistance and rebirth within the Black and Brown community". Scheduled works include Jade Charon's *Testimony and Recharge* and Rayven Armijo's *LA Xingona*. UCLA Kaufman Hall, 120 Westwood Plaza, Westwood; Fri.-Sat., April 13-14, 8 p.m., $15. https://www1.ticketmaster.com/legacy-los-angeles-california-04-13-2018/event/0B005467C3E9525F?artistid=2476068&majorcatid=10002&minorcatid=53&tm_link=venue_msg-0_0B005467C3E9525F.

Two more Tuesday pop up shows from **Heidi Duckler Dance Theatre**. This week look for Andrea Burr and Haylee Nichele. Next week Amanda MacLeod and Rafael Quintas appear. Occidental College Academic Quad, 1600 Campus Rd., Eagle Rock; Tues., April 17 & 24, noon, free.

An Evening with Patricia Ward Kelly on Gene Kelly. Photo courtesy of the artist.

In **An Evening with Patricia Ward Kelly**, Gene Kelly's widow returns with her one woman show combining film clips and her memories of the legendary movie musical dancer, choreographer and director. Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, Bram Goldsmith Theater, 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills; Wed., April 18, 7:30 p.m. As of press time this was sold out, only waiting list available. http://thewallis.org.

In sheer number of performers, stunning costumes and breath-taking precision, **ShenYun** is impressive, while its ties to Falun Dafa (Falun Gong) make it controversial in Chinese politics. The tour stops off at multiple SoCal venues. This week at Microsoft Theatre L.A. Live, 777 Chick Hearn Ct., downtown; Sat., April 14, 2 & 7:30 p.m., Sun., April 15, 1 & 6 p.m., $80-$200. Additional venues and info at http://ShenYun.com/LA.

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