

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Dancing the Scenic Route from Thebes to Colonus

Ann Haskins · Wednesday, March 6th, 2019

A long-running series goes out with a bang in Santa Monica, movie musical tap numbers recreated downtown, a weekend of dance celebrating International Women's Day, a ballet double-bill in Westwood, forced migration considered in Mid-City and Malibu, and more SoCal dance this week.

5. Dancers in demand

Artistic directors Lillian Rose Barbeito and Tina Finelman Burkett have attracted a stunning contingent of dancers to their L.A.-based contemporary company **BODYTRAFFIC** which in turn has drawn some of the most in demand choreographers to create works on the company. This program reprises works by Barak Marshall, Richard Siegal, and Stijn Celis that drew national attention and prompted New York's Joyce Theatre Foundation to declare the ensemble "the company of the future". Info at <http://bodytraffic.com>. Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza, Fred Kavli Theatre, 2100 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Thousand Oaks; Fri., March 19, 8 p.m., \$31-\$61. https://www1.ticketmaster.com/event/0B005549A0041E9F?dma_id=374.



BODYTRAFFIC. Photo by Lee Grumbs.

4. They dance. And still they persist.

Sponsored by **MashUp**, the 3rd annual International Women's Day includes two evening performances featuring L.A.-based women choreographers and their companies. The shows conclude two days of free dance classes at MashUp's studios (2926 Gilroy St., Elysian Valley) involving many of the participating dancemakers plus a final free Sunday event at the Sofitel Hotel (8555 Beverly Blvd., West Hollywood) with workshops, showings and discussions with female artistic directors of L.A.-based companies. Complete details on workshops, choreographers, performances and related events at <https://www.mashupdance.com/performances>. Performances at Bootleg Theater, 2220 Beverly Blvd., Echo Park; Sat., March 9, 7 p.m., Sun., March 10, 2:45 p.m., \$20. <http://www.ticketfly.com/event/1835035-balance-for-better-showcase-1-los-angeles>.



MashUp's 3rd annual International Women's Day. Photo courtesy of the artist.

3. Dancing through the headlines

Choreographer Laurie Sefton and her **Claireobscur Dance Company** unveil a new work and two

strong works from the repertoire that showcase the company's excellent dancers and Sefton's distinctive perspectives on contemporary cultural and political issues. The premiere, *Imminent Drift*, considers destruction of a home or a home country, the civilians forced to flee, their journey seeking refuge and desperate hope for a new home. The dancers are backed by an original score by Bryan Curt Kostors and Victoria Vasta. The evening also includes Sefton's *Supremacy Ride* drawing on gestures employed by the current U.S. president and other world figures plus *Triptych: Experience in Defiance*, with Jason Chu providing the spoken word text that accompanies the dancing. A post-performance Q&A encourages discussion with the artists. Info on the company at <https://www.clairobscurdance.org>. Nate Holden Performing Arts Center, 4087 W. Washington Blvd., Mid-City; Sat., March 9, 8 p.m., \$30-\$45. <http://www.itsmyseat.com/events/856110.html>.



Clairobscur Dance's "Supremacy Ride". Photo by Denise Leitner.

2. A Serenade and Sylph from two Mr. B's

L.A.'s own professional classical ballet company closes its season with a 20th century George Balanchine classic that defined New York City Ballet and a 19th century August Bournonville story ballet that defines Denmark's Royal Danish Ballet. The choices reflect the deep roots **Los Angeles Ballet**'s artistic directors have with both the two choreographers and their companies. Colleen Neary danced with NYCB where Balanchine personally selected her to stage his ballets which she does for major ballet companies all over the world. This time L.A. gets the benefit of her gifts with *Serenade*, the first ballet Balanchine created after arriving in the U.S. Thordal Christensen's roots are with the Royal Danish Ballet where he trained and had a stint as artistic director with the company where Bournonville created both the fleet Danish ballet style and his signature work *La Sylphide*. A taut two-act tale, *La Sylphide* follows a Scottish aristocrat who abandons his own wedding festivities to follow an entrancing woodland sprite, a Sylphide, while at the same time he is being pursued by a vengeful witch. Neary may be the Balanchine expert, but she shows her character chops as the ferocious and manipulative witch. Both ballets put the strong LAB corps deservedly in the spotlight for their exquisite ensemble dancing, a recognized hallmark of a classical ballet company. UCLA Royce Hall, Westwood.; Sat., March 9, 7:30 p.m. Also at Alex Theatre, 216 N. Brand Blvd., Glendale; Sat., March 16, 7:30 p.m. \$36-\$104, 310-998-7782, <http://www.LosAngelesBallet.org>.



Los Angeles Ballet's "Serenade". Photo by Reed Hutchinson.

1. Movin' on down the road

A white silk tent, a puffy purple hooded full-body snow suit, and projected google maps of the route taken over years-long lapse between Sophocles' two classic plays are grist for choreographer Lionel Popkin's *Oedipus/Antigone Project*. Popkin and Barry Brannum are the main dancers with the intermittent participation of videographer Meena Murugesan punctuating this examination of being forced to flee a despotic land and the mutual reliance and interdependence of the two named characters during their displacement and journey. This is the first time a dance work has been selected for a spot in the coveted Getty Villa Theater Lab developing new work derived from the Greek and Roman classics. All tickets are advance purchase. The Saturday matinee includes a talk back session. Getty Villa, 17985 Pacific Coast Hwy., Malibu; Fri., March 8, 7:30 p.m., Sat., March 9, 3 & 7:30 p.m., Sun., March 10, 3 p.m., \$7. 310-440-7300, <http://www.getty.edu/360>.



Lionel Popkin and Barry Brannum in “Oedipus/Antigone Project”. Photo by A.L. Haskins.

Other dance of note:

Over the past seven years, more than 75 emerging choreographers and dance companies have been presented in Highways’ recurring series New Shoes. The series is concluding, but going out with a four-week bang as **Best of New Shoes**. Curated by Highways Artistic Director Patrick Kennelly, each week showcases four choreographers who are alumni of the series. Week one (March 8-9) is shared by Jay Bartley, Bernard Brown, Colleen Hendricks, and Lydia Zimmer. Week two (March 15-16) offers Julianne Mackey, Samantha Mohr, Sophia Stoller and Emily Meister/Liz Bustle. Week three (March 22-23) presents Heidi Brewer, Keith Johnson, Darrian O’Reilly, and Rebecca Pappas. The final week (March 29-30) belongs to Yanina Orellana, Jordan Saenz, Carissa Songhorian, and Lara Wilson. Highways Performance Space, 1651 18th St., Santa Monica; Fri.-Sat., thru Sat., March 30, 8:30 p.m., \$25, \$20 students & seniors. <https://highwaysperformance.org>.



Best of New Shoes, Week No. 1. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Last chances to see **Matthew Bourne’s Cinderella**, displaying the master’s uncanny ability to transform ballet into a theatrical experience that can run for weeks while most ballets barely extend a full weekend. Bourne retains the Prokofiev ballet score and the basic architecture of the fairy tale but as is his wont, sets the action in WWII London during the blitz, reconsiders the fairy godmother as a male who is equally an angel of death, and moves the pivotal meeting from a palace ballroom to a kind of underground nightclub that actually existed despite the German bombings. Music Center Ahmanson Theatre, 135 N. Grand Ave., downtown; Thurs.-Fri., 8 p.m., Sat., 2 & 8 p.m., Sun., 1 & 6:30 p.m., thru Sun., March 10, \$30-

\$175. <https://www.centertheatregroup.org/tickets/ahmanson-theatre/2018-19/new-adventures-matt-hew-bourne-cinderella>



Andrew Monaghan and Ashley Shaw in Matthew Bourne’s “Cinderella.” Photo by Johan Persson.

Everything is coming up *Tap Fest* as seven top notch hoofers take the stage recreating numbers from classic movie musicals. Announced participants include **Melinda Sullivan, Dominique Kelley, Jillian Meyers, Anissa Lee, Assata Madison, Jason Rodgers, and Evan Ruggiero**. Colburn School, Zipper Hall, 200 S. Grand Ave., downtown; Sat., March 9, 6 p.m., \$10. <https://www.colburnschool.edu/calendar/events/tap-fest-performance>.



Melinda Sullivan. Photo by Lee Gumbs.

Choreography from four MFA candidates share the stage in various configurations under the banner *Hemispheres: A Mixtape*. Works by **Cruz** and **Manuel “Manny” Macias** comprise the program on Thursday and Saturday evenings while **Temria Arimet** and **Gen “Reagan” Li**’s works get the spotlight on Friday evening and Saturday matinee. Martha B. Knoebel Dance Theater, Cal State University Long Beach, 6200 E. Atherton St., Long Beach; Thurs.-Fri., March 14-15, 8 p.m., Sat., March 16, 2 & 8 p.m., \$20, \$16 seniors & students. 562-985-7000. <http://www.csulb.edu/dance>, <https://web.ovationtix.com/trs/dept/1174/1551416400000>.



CSULB'S "Hemispheres: Mixed Tape." Photo by Gregory RR Crosby.

The gala performance for this year's **Palm Springs Dance Festival** includes Pat Taylor's JazzAntiqua from L.A., Jackie Lopez and Leigh Foaad's Versa-Style Dance from L.A., Jose Costas' Contempo Ballet from Costa Mesa, Francisco Gella Dance Works from New Mexico, Catherine Cabeen's Hyphen I from New York, Niccolo Orsolani's N.O. Dance from Italy, Julie Simon's Tropicalieza from Riverside, Stephen Agisilaou's Vertical Shadows from Australia, plus festival host Michael Nickerson-Rossi's Nickerson-Rossi Dance Palm Springs Art Museum, Annenberg Theater, Palm Springs; Sat., March 9, 7 p.m., \$55-\$210. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/palm-springs-dance-fest-gala-performance-2019-tickets-53900865941>.



Versa-Style Dance at Palm Springs Dance Festival Gala. Photo courtesy of the artists.

The interplay of the architecture contained in R.M. Schindler's famous concrete "Slab-Tilt" *Schindler House* in West Hollywood and artist Alison Knowles' 1960's intermedia piece *The Play House* is grist for *Shelter or Playground-The House of Dust at the Schindler House*, a series of performative investigations that involve new and recreated performances from around the world. Last month the four month exhibit launched with a day of performances from an international roster of choreographers including locally-based **Milka Djordjevich**. Djordjevich's work is the only one getting a repeat showing, twice a month until June. Details on the Schindler House, Knowles' poem *The House of Dust* that inspired *The Playhouse*, the Fluxus avant garde movement in the late 1950s & 60s of which Knowles was part, and the extended endeavor running through June 2 that incorporates Djordjevich's performances at <https://makcenter.org>. Schindler House, 835 N. Kings Rd., West Hollywood; Sat., March 9 & 23, April 6 & 20, May 4 & 18, June 1, 3 p.m., free. <https://makcenter.org>.



Milka Djordjevich. Photo courtesy of the artist.

A harbinger of 2019 centennial activities celebrating the life and legend of the late modern dance choreographer **Merce Cunningham**, *Clouds and Screens*, includes two large works by Andy Warhol and Charles Atlas, both artists associated with Cunningham's company. The installation also includes two early videos of Cunningham's work with performances and more to come during the exhibition's run. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 5905 Wilshire Blvd., Hancock Park; Thurs.-Tues., thru March 31, \$25, \$21 students & seniors (museum admission). http://www.lacma.org/event/memprev_merce2.



Merce Cunningham. Photo by Jack Mitchell courtesy of Getty Images.

Note to readers: In keeping with the growing activity surrounding the **Cunningham Centennial**, LA Dance Chronicle is providing a place for individuals who worked with Merce Cunningham, saw his work or otherwise just want to say something about Merce Cunningham to participate in the Centennial remembrance. L.A. Dance Chronicle founder Jeff Slayton danced with Cunningham's company and championed the idea of a place individuals could post a remembrance or comment about Merce Cunningham, his dance works or his legacy. The **Cunningham Centennial Page** now is live at the website (<http://LADanceChronicle.com>). Comments will be

collected and passed on to the Cunningham Trust.

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