Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Essential Force Multipliers

Ann Haskins · Thursday, November 21st, 2024

New York powerhouse dancers downtown; rarely seen post-modern works honor a legendary creator in Santa Monica, contemporary ballet in Northridge and Heritage Square, a tap/piano duo celebrate Gershwin in Costa Mesa, new contemporary choreography sightings in the Arts District, Atwater Village, Long Beach, and downtown; Kabuki-infused Sondheim in Little Tokyo, more SoCal dance this busy week, and a peek at next week.

Live This Week

(through November 28)

A force from the past

When he first made his name in the 1960s as part of the postmodern dance movement often associated with New York City's Judson Church, **Rudy Perez**' work was often described as minimalist and other times as succinct but always born from a deep dance aesthetic. Soon after his start on the East Coast, Perez came west as a UCLA guest lecturer, stayed, and spent subsequent decades here, cultivating generations of dancers in his intensely focused, stripped down aesthetic. Perez died September 2023 at the age of 93. For *Retrospective,* a celebration of what would have been the modern dance legend's 95th birthday, a number of Perez' dancers will present his danceworks, many not been seen here for a long time. Scheduled performers include Anne Grimaldo & Jeff Grimaldo, Jarred Cairns, Mona Jean Cedar, Alessia Patregnani, Sarah Swenson, and Isabel Van Zigl. Especially for anyone who has never seen what made Perez a force in LA and a legend in dance, this is a not-to-miss opportunity. Highways Performance Space, 1651 18th St., Santa Monica; Sun., Nov. 24, 3 pm, $25, $20 students/seniors. Highways.

Rudy Perez. Photo courtesy of the artist

Women with power

For 40 years, **Urban Bush Women** have celebrated the Black experience with powerful and exhilarating dance. For this visit, the work is *SCAT!… The Complex Lives of Al & Dot, Dot & Al Zollar*. Set in a fictional Kansas City jazz club, the work was the last choreographed by UBW founder Jawole Willa Jo Zollar. It also marks the first professional dance company presented in this 739-seat theater whose thrust stage bodes well for bringing the dance close to the audience. UBW is an initial collaboration between Center Theatre Group and Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance, and hopefully, not the last. The Music Center, Mark Taper Forum, 135 N. Grand Ave., downtown; Fri, Nov. 22, 7: 30 pm, Sat., Nov. 23, 2 & 7:30 pm, Sun., Nov. 24, 2 pm, $33-$70. Music Center.

Urban Bush Women. Photo courtesy of the artists

The last for now

This year's **New Original Works (NOW) Fest** concludes with three choreographers, Bret Easterling, Mallory Fabian, and Kensaku Shinohara. An interview by Jeff Slayton about their work for the NOW fest is at LA Dance Chronicle. REDCAT, Disney Hall, 631 W. 2nd St., downtown; Thurs.-Sat., Nov. 21-23, 8:30 pm, $25, $20 students. REDCAT.

Kensaku Shinohara. Photo by Angelo Origgi

The last chapter

The Victorian houses of Heritage Square were built decades after the Civil War era homes depicted

in Louisa May Alcott's classic novel *Little Women*, but they are close enough to provide a historical atmosphere for choreographer Emma Andres ongoing series of site-specific ballet episodes that have been building to a full-length **Little Women Ballet**. Presented in partnership with Pasadena Civic Ballet and with live music, the event moves among the Heritage Square Victorians, with post-performance folk dancing, refreshments, and photos with the cast. The December performance combining all four episodes is scheduled for a theater performance, but there is something special seeing it sited among these elegant houses. Heritage Square Museum, 3800 Homer St., Montecito Heights; Fri.-Sun., Nov. 22-24, 6:30 pm, Sat.-Sun., Nov. 23-24, 3 pm, $60. Details at Little Women Ballet. Tickets.

Little Women Ballet. Photo courtesy of the artists

Collaborations

Dance loves live music. For *Fusion*, **Cal State Long Beach Dance** collaborated with the Bob Cole Conservatory of Music for an evening combing both. The participating choreographers include guest artist Hanna Victoria Thomas and faculty choreographers Tsiambwom Akuchu, Lorin Jonson, Rebecca Lemme and Andrew Vaca. Carpenter Performing Arts Center, 6200 E. Atherton

St., Long Beach; Fri.-Sat., Nov. 22-23, $25-$30. CSULB.

Cal State University Dance. Photo courtesy of the artists

Gershwin meets tap and piano

From the title *Conrad Tao & Friends,* clearly pianist **Conrad Tao** is the main attractions on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue.* For tap enthusiasts, one of the pianist's good friends and favorite collaborators is tap dancer **Caleb Teicher**. The two stunned audiences with their intricate and often improvised collaborations at a recent UCLA's Nimoy Theater show. Segerstrom Center for the Arts, Concert Hall, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa; Sat., Nov. 23, 8 pm, $42.94-$99.44 SCFTA.

Conrad Tao + Caleb Teicher. Photo by EM Watson

Contemporary Canadian

While it is curious that this major local presenter decided to go far beyond Southern California, to

Canada actually, to choose a dance company-in-residence, **Ballet BC** returns for its fourth visit. Led by artist director Medhi Walerski, the program includes *Chamber* and *Silent*, two works by Walerski, plus *Frontiers* by Crystal Pike. The artistic director danced with Nederlands Dance Theatre where she was in an earlier version of Pike's *Frontiers.* The Soraya, Cal State University Northridge, 18111 Nordhoff St., Northridge; Sat., Nov. 23, 8 pm, $48-$118. The Soraya.

Ballet BC. Photo by Marcus Eriksson

Booker prize to puppetry

The master puppeteers of **Handspring Puppet Company** who created *War Horse,* joined forces with **Cape Town's Baxter Theatre** to create *Life & Times of Michael K.* Based on the 1983 Booker Prize winning novel by Nobel Laureate J.M. Coetzee, the story follows a humble man on an epic journey. Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, Bram Goldsmith Theater, 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd, Beverly Hills; Thurs.-Sat., Nov. 21-23, 7:30 pm, Sat.-Sun., Nov. 22-23, 2 pm, $39-99. The Wallis.

Life & Times of Michael K. Photo by Fiona McPherson

R&J's last moves

Known for her contemporary troupe *Hysterica*, Kitty McNamee has been a frequent choreographer for **LA Opera**, including the 2005 and 2011 productions of Gounod's *Romeo & Juliet.* This time McNamee is directing the opera that has the chorus and leads dancing as well as singing. Last show. Music Center Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 135 N. Grand Ave., downtown; Sat., Nov. 23, 7:30 pm, 7:30 pm, $33.50-$400. LA Opera.

LA Opera's "Romeo and Juliet." Photo by Robert Millard

Return to the overture

When **East West Players** chose Stephen Sondheim's *Pacific Overtures* for the 50th anniversary of

the show's Broadway premiere, it also lured back former artistic director Tim Dang who directed the show when EWP moved to its current mid-sized theater in Little Tokyo. Dang not only brings a background in dance, he brought in three additional choreographers, Broadway dancer/choreographer Yuka Takara, Kabuki consultant Kirk Kanesaka (aka Ganky? Nakamura), and fight director Amanda Noriko Newman. The show continues EWP's long history presenting Sondheim in a theater sized to allow audiences to see the full show and still hear every precious lyric. David Henry Hwang Theater in the Union Center for the Arts, 120 Judge John Aiso St., Little Tokyo; Thurs., Fri. & Mon, 8 pm, Sat. 2 & 8 pm, Sun. 5 pm, thru Dec. 1. $15-$74. East West Players.

Kit DeZolt as Commodore Matthew Commodor Perry performing "Lion Dance." Photo by Teolindo.

Back on the Beach

The granddaddy of all the cirques, **Cirque du Soleil**, returns with its signature tent and the show *Kooza*, brimming with acrobats and clowns. The two month run offers lots of time to catch the show, maybe more than once? Under the Big Top at Santa Monica Pier, 1550 Pacific Coast Hwy., Santa Monica; thru Sun., Jan. 5, $58-$344. Details on the many dates and times at the website. Cirque du Soleil.

Cirque du Soleil. Photo courtesy of the artists

Teasing

The title says it all: *The Empire Strips Back: A Burlesque Parody*. The show returns after its 2022 run at this venue. The Montalbán Theatre, 1615 Vine St., Hollywood; Thurs., 7:30 pm, Fri., 7 pm, Sat., 7 & 9:30 pm, Sun., 4 pm, thru Dec. 1. $44-$109. The Empire Strips Back.

A Peek at Next Week (November 29-Dec. 5)

CalArts Winter Dance at REDCAT at Disney Hall, 631 W. 2nd St., downtown; Thurs.-Fri., Dec. 5-6, 8:30 pm, $20. REDCAT.

Work in Progress/LA — *Charissa Kroeger* and *TRIN Dance Theatre* at G-Son Studios, 3218 Glendale Blvd. (enter through the alley), Atwater Village; Mon., Dec. 2, 7:30 pm, $15. WIP/LA.

This entry was posted on Thursday, November 21st, 2024 at 6:11 am and is filed under Theatre, Music, Dance, Performing
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