

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Figuring Things Out

Ann Haskins · Wednesday, August 12th, 2020

After closing in March, SoCal venues first postponed, then finally kissed the rest of 2020 goodbye. In a possibly optimistic sign, media releases came this week announcing Shen Yun and a tango show at local theaters in April and May 2021. As venues figure out the physical and financial issues in reopening for live performance in a possibly prolonged pandemic era, scrappy SoCal dance companies may have more agility than larger touring companies to quickly adapt to whatever new landscape emerges. Meanwhile, in the five months since live performance essentially ceased, local dance has bloomed on the internet with virtual festivals able to incorporate out of state and international participants, increasingly polished films and streams, encore videos of prior performances, plus workshops and online classes. Here is what is happening this week in SoCal dance:

A festival pops up

Hosted by **The Cray Project** and sponsored by the Long Beach Arts Council, the debut of the **Long Beach Black Dance Festival** was planned before George Floyd and the resurgence of Black Lives Matter, but those forces make the new venture even more timely. As with other planned live events, festival performances from choreographers and companies of color will be streamed from the Long Beach Playhouse and at pop up locations. Fri.-Sun., Aug. 14–16, 5 p.m. Details on [Facebook](#) and at [Cray Project](#).



L.A. Contemporary Dance Company. 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](#). Another 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. Information on other LACDC virtual programming on [their website](#). *BLINK* on [Vimeo](#).



Heidi Duckler Dance. Photo by Mae Koo.

Not so romantic California

Based on the 1884 story by Helen Hunt Jackson, a dramatization of *Ramona* was a regular pageant at the San Gabriel Mission for many decades and became something of a branding tool for the romantic ideal of early California. The ongoing reexamination of the role of Spanish missionaries and recent fire at the mission has reinvigorated discussion and examination of California's romanticized past. Almost two years ago, **Heidi Duckler Dance** with its band of dancers, musicians, actors and performers were early participants in the discussion with a site-specific contemporary consideration of female empowerment and racial discrimination that interlace with the romanticism in this timeless coming of age tale at the very mission that figures prominently in the Jackson's *The Story of Ramona*. Those 2018 performances became part of a larger HDD initiative *Ramona: Reimagining, Unsettling and Reckoning* that continues with a three-part virtual salon series expanding the discussion with art, music, conversation and a deep dive into the story of Ramona related to the histories and contemporary experiences of Native Americans in California through. The first salon with Navajo filmmaker Pamela J. Peters and Dr. Yve Chavez, a member of the Tongva community and Assistant Professor at UC Santa Cruz streams Thurs., Aug. 13 with the other following on Thurs., Aug 20 & Aug. 27, 5 p.m. PDT. Free with reservation on [Eventbrite](#). Details and complete line up at [Heidi Duckler](#).



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

Festive females

Works by nine female choreographers highlight the day long celebration of *Women in Jazz Dance*, hosted by choreographer Pat Taylor and her **JazzAntiqua Dance & Music Ensemble**. Divided into two programs that stream throughout the event, the choreographers include Erika Novachik from Brazil, Monique Haley from Michigan, Kimberley Cooper from Canada, ERinn Liebhard from Minnesota, Gynthis Gutierrez from Oregon and locals Keisha Clark-Booth from Long Beach and Taylor from L.A. The fest also includes free online master classes and discussions about jazz dance. Details on [Facebook](#).

Leave it to a B-Girl

B-Girl Asia Yu founded the B-Boy Summit 20 years ago as an annual celebration. After last year's 2019 B-Boy Summit hosted at Music Center Grand Park, here comes **B-Boy Summit 2020**, this time in a virtual format. With the theme of *Hip Hop 4 Social Change*, the fest promises street dance, art and music performances, along with educational panels and discussions focused on social justice activism. Fri.-Sun., Aug. 14–16. Event details, times, and streaming at [B-Boy Summit](#), and [The Music Center Offstage](#).



Marissa Brown of Lone King Projects. Photo by Josh Rose.

Working her way back home

CalArts MFA student **Marissa Brown** shifted from her own choreography including a residency at LA Dance Project when she joined the cast of the new Broadway production of *Westside Story*. As Covid-19 closed Broadway theaters and campuses, Brown turned her attention back to her Lone King Projects and contributes a dance film to the digital *Concept* series. Presented by the San Francisco/New York-based RAWdance, the series includes work from Eric Garcia (Detour Dance), Frankie Lee III (FLEE), Megan Lowe (Megan Lowe Dances), Jocelyn Reyes (Reyes Dance), and hot company's co-artistic directors Katerina Wong, Wendy Rein, and Ryan T. Smith. Fri., Aug. 14, 6 p.m. PDT, streaming on [RAWdance](#).



Rosanna Gamson/World Wide. Photo by Jose Diaz.

Bi-coastal fest

Inspired by the Persian tale of Shahrzad, **Rosanna Gamson's** *Layla Means Night* is the only LA entry among the 52 filmed performances assembled for the 39th *Battery Dance Film Festival*. New York's longest running free public dance festival goes viral with filmed dance from the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Japan and North America. Festival themes change each day and include women choreographers, the ratification of women's right to vote with the 19th amendment, Black voices in dance, India's Independence Day, and New York City's resilience. After their opening, films will be online for ten days. Streaming begins Fri. Aug. 14 through Sat., Aug 22, 4 p.m. PDT (7 p.m. EDT). Details on each night's line-up and streaming link at the [Festival website](#). Gamson is part of the Tues., Aug. 18, 7 p.m. Until the festival stream, a concentrated taste of *Layla Means Night* is currently streaming on [Vimeo](#).



Iris 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](#).

SoCal Encore Streaming

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. [On Vimeo](#).



Diavolo Veterans Project. Photo by George Simian.

A show of force

In what may prove a timely 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 Him 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 is hosting this event as part of the theater's *Fridays at 4* series. Info at <https://www.thesoraya.org/>. Film stream: Fri., July 31, 4 p.m., [Facebook](#).



BrockusRED. Photo by Denise Leitner.

LA Dance in Korea

The always-anticipated **LA Dance Festival** was among local spring dance events postponed or cancelled by the Covid-19 shutdown. Last week the festival streamed virtual performances hosted by Cal State University Los Angeles' Luckman Theater. A second batch of performances is in the works. Meanwhile, last week's second stream with the LA Festival's partnership with a Korean event continues on view with several of the companies originally announced for the LA Festival included in the stream of **Seoul International Dance Festival** thru Sat., Aug. 8. <https://ingdance.kr/22>.



Micaela Taylor's TL Collective. Photo by Steve Gunther.

Toughing it

Dancers Emara Neymour, Santiago Villarreal, and Matt Luck join choreographer **Micaela Taylor** in her video *Toughskin* now streaming. <https://www.thetlcollective.com/toughskin..>



Viver Brasil. 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. This week the ensemble brings back work from 2017. 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](#).



Carlton. 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](#).



Dohee Lee. Photo by Pak Han.

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 hosts a live episode of the venue's streamed series. That live session will join the venue's instagram channel's 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](#).



Malpaso Dance Company. Photo by Bill Hebert.

More 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/>.

Coming to a sidewalk near you

With theaters somewhere in stage 4 of that elusive reopening, CAP UCLA paired with the National YoungArts Foundation to bring local performers to where the audience lives with **The Sidewalk Sessions**. For \$50, artists will show up and perform on a sidewalk or driveway for the sponsor and invited and socially distanced friends and neighbors. Sponsors can indicate a preference for type of artist, but organizers will schedule artists based on geographical proximity and availability. The plan is for performances to last approximately 15 minutes and all proceeds will go to the artists. For more information or to schedule for July, August or September: [Google Doc](#).



Kevin Williamson. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Something to think about

Subtitled "a dance meditation," in *Safe and Sound*, choreographer **Kevin Williamson** and his collaborators: Kayla Johnson, Justin Morris, Alexandra Rixx, Kevin Williamson, Anna Luisa

Petrisko, Taso Papadakis, Kelsey Vidic, Katelan Braymer stream their recent performance hosted by Stomping Ground LA. The performance was performed at Dixon Place's Hot! Festival – the NYC Celebration of Queer Performance. Free, but donations accepted. [Tickets for the stream](#) are still available, [Dixon Place](#).



Pony Box Dance Theatre. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Putting the best foot forward

Two events from the all-male contemporary troupe **Pony Box Dance Theatre** and the artistic director Jamie Carbetta continue on-line. The Mutcultural Festival *Best Foot Forward* page has an intro from Raymond Ejiofor and the two dance excerpts are introduced by choreographer/performer Elijah Laurant. Another example of how the City of LA, Department of Cultural Affairs is funding and supporting LA dance. Info at <https://www.ponyboxdance.org/>. Stream on [Facebook](#).



BlakTinx. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Street to stage

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/>. [Program One](#), [Program Two](#), [Program Three](#), [Program Four](#).



Jacob Jonas The Company. 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, six weeks ago 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. The five minute final cut debuted this week. With the film 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](#).



Sean Greene. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Looking back

Despite an extensive career in dance here and abroad, **Sean Greene** locally will always be identified with his decade with the Bella Lewitzky Dance Company. With her career based mostly in New York, notably with Laura Dean, **Liz Maxwell** is less well known in SoCal, but both Greene and Maxwell are on the Chapman College dance faculty and were the focus of *Always a Dancer*. The live interview included several clips of Maxwell dancing and then commenting on the roll, the choreography, and the choreographer. Sadly, only still photos were available for Greene's work for Lewitzky. The conversation and visuals are facilitated gently by Napoleon W. Gladney quietly demonstrating his own background as a performer and arts administrator (he's now audience development administrator for the Musco Center for the Arts which hosted the program). The live-streamed interview is now up and available for viewing. Info on [Musco Online](#). Stream on [YouTube](#).



Heidi Duckler Dance. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Alone with a chandelier

The site specific performance ensemble **Heidi Duckler Dance** has been actively exploring the possibilities in combining live and virtual performance. Last week's *Ebb & Flow: Chinatown 2020* allowed audiences to stroll about installations with dance projected into some of the constructs. Other ongoing streamed projects include a five-minute video drawn from the live performance of *The Chandelier* based on a work by Brazilian author Clarice Lispector about a woman experiencing isolation and trying to connect. Choreographed by Duckler, the performers include Himerria Wortham, Rafael Quintas, Myles Lavalley, Nicole Flores, Maureen Asic, Magdalena Edwards, Jessica Emmanuel, Jaeme Velez, David Guerra, and Paula Rebelo. [Vimeo](#). Video of the [full zoomed performance](#).



Barak Ballet. Photo courtesy of the artists.

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 at <https://barakballet.org/>. Streaming on [Facebook](#).



Versa Style Dance. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Locking it up

Paying tribute to Don Campbell, the creator of the Locking dance style, the street dance troupe

Versa Style Dance Company and its youth organization **Versa-Style Next Generation** unveil *Finding Creativity and Fun in Our Personal Space*. The streamed performance gets help from musician Cody “CoFlo” Ferreira’s *Playground Samba*. [YouTube](#), [Facebook](#). Info at <http://versastyledance.org/events/>.



Akomi Dance. Photo by Vytas Barauskas.

Festival in a box

After Covid–19 shelter at home caused cancellation, the **Orange County Dance Festival** was among the first to shift to streaming. Throughout April and May, a recorded version of the work each company or artist was scheduled to perform was streamed for three days in show order. Bonuses included company photos, artistic statements, and links to websites and social media platforms. Now the OCDF website has collected the individual events from AkomiDance, Contempo Ballet, 7th Street Dance Company, ISSA Dance Company, Animus Dance Co., Jazz Spectrum Dance Company, Emergent Dance Company, Pacific Ballet Dance Theatre, Louise Reichlin & Dancers, The Hubbard Collective, Kairos Dance Co., and Fuse Dance Company. [AkomiDance](#).

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 *Pandemia*, meaning a hyper energized state. Info on the judges, prior winners, plus rules and regulations for submission at: www.dare2danceinpublicfilmfestival.com. The group’s other film endeavor *Six Foot Dances* is still accepting one-minute films. Current submissions on [Instagram](#) and [Cultural Weekly](#).

Where to Find Online Dance Classes

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.

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