

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Inherent Intentionalities

Ann Haskins · Wednesday, February 26th, 2025

Venerated choreographer directs Sondheim downtown; Iconic dance recreated in Santa Monica; new choreography in Santa Monica and Atwater Village; ballet in Santa Barbara and Irvine; more SoCal dance this week, plus a peek at next week.

Live This Week

Putting new feet forward

Both weeks of the Highway series **New Shoes 2025** are jam-packed with fresh choreography and innovative approaches to dance. Week 1 includes *Cabin of Pleasure* from **Gia Bella & Casey Shea**. *Drive* is the calling card from **Caitlin Javech/Torrent**. In her solo *Elytra*, **Melissa Younker** performs within a synthetic exoskeleton. Info on Week 2 at the website. Highways Performance Space, 1651 18th St., Santa Monica; Fri.-Sat., Feb. 28-March 1, 8 pm, \$25.63. [Highways Performance](#).



Rebecca Lee and Joe Davis in Caitlin Javech's choreography. Photo by Hope Spears

The story swims on

A new production of *The Little Mermaid* takes the stage for three performances. **State Street Ballet**'s artistic director Megan Philipp choreographed and the Saturday matinee is a sensory-friendly show. Lobero Theatre, 33 E. Canon Perdido St., Santa Barbara; Sat. & Sun., March 1 & 2, 7:30 pm, \$35-\$65, \$24 children under 12 years. [Lobero Theatre](#).



State Street Ballet. Photo courtesy of the artists

Progressing

For the latest edition of *WIP Work in Progress*, the stage is shared by contemporary dancer and the activist **Dancing Through Prison Walls** led by Suchi Branfman. This monthly Monday night series offers dancemakers a chance to gauge audience reaction to work in progress and offers audiences a preview and a chance for input into new choreography coming soon. G-Son Studios, 3218 Glendale Blvd., Atwater Village; Mon., March 3, 7:30 pm, \$15. [Tickets](#)



Rosanna Tavarez. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Strum and dance

Known for his prowess on the guitar, **Benise** is also known as a consummate showman and dancers are a central element as he illustrates Spanish flamenco, salsa, samba, and the waltz. A frequent SoCal visitor, this tour's banner is *25 Years of Passion* with stops now and again this fall. Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts, 18000 Park Plaza Dr., Cerritos; Sat., March 22, 7:30 pm, \$54-\$94. [Ticketmaster](#). Also at Lancaster Performing Arts Center, 750 W. Lancaster Blvd., Lancaster; Fri., Feb. 28, 7:30 pm, \$48.50-\$106. [LPAC](#). Also at Fox Performing Arts Center, 3801 Mission Ave., Riverside; Sat., Sept. 13, 7:30 pm, \$57-\$123. [Tickets](#). Also at Lobero Theatre, Santa Barbara; Fri., Oct. 10, 7:30 pm, \$46.50-\$102.50. [Lobero](#). Also at Fred Kavli Theatre, Bank of America Performing Arts Center, 2100 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd., Thousand Oaks; Sat., Oct. 11, 7:30 pm, \$33-\$113. [Ticketmaster](#).



Benise. Photo courtesy of the artists

Dancing benefit

Young talent from the prestigious ballet competition **Youth America Grand Prix (YAGP)** will be joined by professionals in this gala to benefit SoCal fire victims. Announced pros include New York City Ballet's Tiler Peck, American Ballet Theatre's Elisabeth Beyer, and Boston Ballet's Isaac Mueller. Irvine Barclay Theatre, UC Irvine, 4242 Campus Dr., Irvine; Mon., March 3, 7 pm., \$34-\$155. [Irvine Barclay](#).



Tiler Peck. Photo courtesy of the artist

Revisiting a rarity

Considered a masterpiece, choreographer Blondell Cummings' 1981 solo *Chicken Soup* has a rare performance by SoCal choreographer/dancer **Marjani Forté-Saunders**. Focusing on domestic labor as the soul of a household, the work is presented as part of *Uplifting Black Legacy* through the City of Santa Monica Cultural Affairs Division's partnership with New York City's Danspace Project. Annenberg Beach House, 415 Pacific Coast Hwy., Santa Monica; Thurs., Feb. 27, 7 pm, free w/reservation at [Eventbrite](#).



Marjani Forté-Saunders. Photo courtesy of the artists

Influential events

Originally commissioned for the Egyptian Pavilion at the 2024 Venice Biennale, the film installation *Drama 1882* from **Wael Shawky** considers the events that countered a revolt against European colonial influence, resulting in Britain cementing its control of Egypt for another seven decades. Adapting the storied events into the form of an opera and performed in classical Arabic, Shawky choreographed, wrote, scored, and directed. This event is the latest in the museum's *Wonmi's WAREHOUSE Programs*. Related events include a conversation with Shawky and assistant curator Alex Sloane on Sat., Feb. 22 at 3 pm. WAREHOUSE, MOCA Geffen Contemporary, 152 N. Central Ave., Little Tokyo; Thurs. – Sun., thru March 16, 11 am, free w/reservation at [Tickets](#).



Wael Shawky. Photo courtesy of the artist.

With friends like these

Directed by legendary choreographer Matthew Bourne, with additional choreography from Stephen Mear, *Stephen Sondheim's Old Friends* is headlined by Bernadette Peters, Lea Salonga, and a lineup of British and American musical theater luminaries. Perhaps because of Bourne's long relationship with the Center Theater Group, LA nabbed the U.S. premiere before the Sondheim celebration goes to Broadway. Music Center, Ahmanson Theatre, 135 N. Grand Ave., downtown; Tues.-Fri., 8 pm, Sat., 2 & 8 pm, Sun., 1 & 6:30 pm, thru March 9, \$25 – \$195.50. [CTG](#).



The company of Stephen Sondheim's *Old Friends*. Photo by Danny Kaan

A Peek at Next Week

RUBBERBAND — *Second Chances* at the BroadStage, 1310 11th St., Santa Monica; Sat., March 8, 7:30 pm, Sun., March 9, 2 pm, \$40-\$85. [BroadStage](#).

Benita Bike's DanceArt at LA Mission College, AMP Theater, 13356 Eldridge Ave., Sylmar; Wed., March 12, 2 pm, free. [DanceArt](#).

American Contemporary Ballet — *Jazz & Homecoming* at ACB Studios, Bank of America Plaza, 333 S Hope St, Suite C-150, downtown; Jazz, Fri., March 7, 14, 21, & Thurs., March 13 & 20, 8 pm, Homecoming, Sat., March 8, 15, & Thurs.-Sat., March 27-29, 8 pm, \$65 0 \$140. [ACB](#).



MashUp Contemporary Dance Company. Photo courtesy of the artists

MashUp's International Women's Day Dance Festival — Full event info at [MashUp](#). *Kick Off Party* at the Pickle Factory, 2828 Gilroy St., Frogtown; Fri. March 7, 7 pm, \$40. [Tickets](#). *Choreographers Showcase* at Stomping Ground LA, 5453 Alhambra Ave., El Sereno; Sat., March 8, 3:30 & 7:30 pm, \$30. [Tickets](#).

Backhausdance — *Spring Fête* at the Pacific Club, 4110 MacArthur Blvd., Newport Beach; Sat., March 8, 7:30 – 10 pm, \$275 & up. [Backhausdance](#).

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