Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Now It's About Getting Out

Ann Haskins · Wednesday, May 19th, 2021

Live dance on a parking lot stage, National Tap Day takes downtown, LatinX collaborations, African diaspora part 7, a palimpsest in residence, new lessons from a prior plague, plus recent online encores, where to take online dance classes, and more SoCal dance this week.

This Week

Tapping In

Stepping gingerly into the post-pandemic world, the Music Center returns with an outdoor summer dance series under the banner *Dance at Dusk*. Opening just in time for National Tap Dance Day (May 25), the debut event offers a combination of five live, Covid-compliant, outdoor performances by a trio of tapmasters, a free livestream of the final Sunday show, and a week-long public tap dance park (free with timed reservations.) The dance park visitors may pick up some steps from the trio of pros—Dormeshia, Jason Samuels Smith and Derick K. Grant performing as *The Super Villainz: A Tap Dance Act for the Modern Age*. A planned livestream to Grand Park did not get the go-ahead for this opening but with three more out of town visitors scheduled into July, a Grand Park live stream may still happen later. Details on public health precautions for the live audience and dance park visitors are posted at the website. Live performances at the Music Center's Jerry Moss Plaza, 135 N. Grand., downtown; Wed.-Sun., May 26–30, 7:30 p.m. $200 (buys a pod for four). Livestream, Sun., May 30, 7:30 free. Super Villainz Tap Dance Park, Music Center's Jerry Moss Plaza; Mon.-Sun., May 24–30, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. free, with reservation. Info, reservations and tickets at Music Center.

The Super Villainz: A Tap Dance Act for the Modern Age. Photo courtesy of the Music Center.

Take the parking lot!

As the pandemic settled in last summer, the parking lot of LA Dance Project's arts district studio offered dance performances for audiences, first vehicle-contained and later on socially-distanced and online. Now there is an official outdoor stage ready to host five weeks of *Dances in the Open* with a new work from former New York City Ballet principal dancer and current LADP company member Janie Taylor along with the reprise of *Solo at Dusk* choreographed by Bobbi Jene Smith with Or Schraiber that was part of the earlier parking lot presentations. Two family friendly shows on Sun., June 13 & 20 at 6:30 p.m. offer $10 children's tickets. LA Dance Project studios, 2245 E. Washington Blvd., Arts District; Wed.-Sat., May 27-June 25, 8 p.m., Sun., May 30 & June 6, 8 p.m., $50 & $175, $25 & $100 students w/i.d. Sun., June 13 & 20, 6:30 p.m., $10 children. More info and seating detail at OvationTix.

LA Dance Project. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Filling the time

Pedestrian and non-pedestrian activities fuel **taisha paggett**'s latest, *com.pleats.we (housecoat)*. Not just playing with words in the provocative title, this dancer/choreographer constructs her own definition of performance, taking over this venue with a 24/7 livestream totaling 240 hours as she aspires to a live and real consideration of Black collectivity as well as solitude in the pandemic-induced new normal. Now 30-minute in-person visits on May 22 & 23 are available for free with time-assigned reservations. REDCAT, online thru Sun., May 23 at 10 p.m., in-person visits Sat,-Sun., May 23,-24, by reservation, free. Info, tix, and reservations at REDCAT.

Taisha Paggett. Photo by Justin Sullivan.

She does like a good book

Choreographer **Rosanna Gamson** has drawn some of her most compelling work from literature ranging from *Scheherazade* in *Tales of the Arabian Nights* to the Brothers Grimm's *Hansel and Gretel*, and lectures by theoretical physicist Richard Feynman. Other than Albert Camus' *The Plague*, what could be more appropriate pandemic source material than Boccaccio's *Decameron* with tales from ten strangers sheltering from the bubonic plague? Just as the tales of the ten travelers unfold one at a time, Gamson's *The Decameron Project* rolls out ten films, each made by a different artist. The episodes for the first five weeks are from **Jinglin Liao, Kevin Zambrano, Dion Pratt, Gretchen Ackerman,** and **Clementine Gamson-Levyare,** viewable for free on Instagram.

Rosanna Gamson/WorldWide. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Hybrid performance shifts to stream

The first post-pandemic opening of a major venue brings the new kind of hybrid presentation, with a socially-distanced live concert followed by a streamed version. A promising combo that likely will continue as part of dance's post-pandemic future. Over the past year, many dance companies created safe bubbles for small groups of dancers to work with choreographers, mostly for live-streamed performances although occasionally in the outdoors for limited audiences. **American Ballet Theatre** made safe bubbles for 18 dancers who worked with a trio of New York-based choreographers–Jessica Lang, Lauren Lovette, and Darrell Grand Moultrie. Segerstrom Center for the Arts hosted the single performance before a limited live audience and a streamed version is available this week. Along with the three new, contemporary works, more traditional ballet gets a nod with the technical showpiece *Grande Pas Classique* and the pas de deux from *Swan Lake, Act II*. Now streaming thru Wed., May 26, $25 per household. Segerstrom Center.

American Ballet Theater. Photo by Todd Rosenberg Photography.

Pulitzer dances

Dance continues to be part of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra's digital series *CLOSE QUARTERS*. Choreographer Rebecca Steinberg along with dancers Layne Paradis Willis and Joe Davis collaborated with stage director George Miller in two scheduled works, Ellen Reid's *Lumee's Aria* from the Pulitzer-winning opera *p r i s m* and Benjamin Britten's musical setting of Rimbaud poems, *Illuminations*. The program also includes the premiere of Peter S. Shin's *Hyo* and a pre-broadcast discussion at 5:30 p.m. Online Fri., May 21, 6:30 p.m. PDT, free (donations are welcome) at the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra's website, YouTube page, Facebook page.

Joe Davis. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Glass gone

As of press time, all announced performances of **Long Beach Opera**'s production of Philip Glass' *Les Enfants Terribles* with Chris Emile's choreography are sold out. With the sell out, let's hope Emile's work and that of dancers Shauna Davis, Samantha Mohr, Maleek Washington, and Joe Davis will be viewable later on as part of LBO's active online program. Long Beach Opera, May 21–23. Sold out. Long Beach Opera.

Long Beach Opera's "Les Enfants Terribles." Photo courtesy of the artist.

Showing theirs

Those ever-exploring folk at **Show Box LA** offer two different events this week. In *X-Collaborations*, LatinX artists Pavel Acevedo, Diana Cervera, and choreographer/dancer Gabriel Gutierrez brought different geographic perspectives and artistic practices to the creation of a virtually designed performance. The series is designed to encourage artists to network, collaborate, and experiment. The product of this trio's interaction is online Thurs., May 27, 6:30 PDT, $10. Eventbrite. Finding ways to weave together dance, poetry, and printmaking in an effort to map individual and collective experience, *Cayuco Corriente: Our Current*, is another series online this week from **Show Box LA**. Eventbrite.

Show Box LA's Gabriel Guttierrez. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Finale, but it's not over

The final offering of Ron McCurdy's *From Tragedy to Triumph*, a seven-part, musical tour of the African diaspora draws on choreography, music, spoken word and dramatizations to zoom in on centuries of Black women struggling for equality and justice. **Nina Gumbs** contributed choreography to the series. The live-streamed program *Call Me Triumphant! Call Me Black* airs Fri., May 21, 6 p.m., free with reservation at USC Thornton.

Nina Gumbs. Photo by Rose Eichenbaum.

Doing it with “style”

Like that energized bunny, **Versa-Style Dance Company** just doesn’t seem to stop. This week it’s a free online performance. Fri., May 21, 7 p.m. PDT., free (donations encouraged). Reservations at OvationTix.

Versa-Style Dance. Photo courtesy of the artists.

In the spotlight

For 31 of its 33 year existence, performing on the stage of the Music Center was as much a prize as the scholarship awarded to the high school performing and visual artists selected as finalists in the Music Center’s **Spotlight Awards**. For the second year, the pandemic requires a virtual event for

the 14 finalists selected from nearly 1,500 SoCal high school students who applied. Hosted by Josh Groban who participated when he was in high school, this year's *The Music Center's Spotlight Virtual Grand Finale Performance* includes dance finalists Emmy Cheung from Santa Ana and Selena Hamilton from L.A., and ballet finalists Mia Schlosser from Thousand Oaks and Natalie Steele from San Juan Capistrano. Online Sat., May 22, 7 p.m., Music Center and Facebook Live. Spotlight.

Music Center Spotlight Awards. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Got a gala?

A live, socially-distanced outdoor evening of dance, food, drink, and auction is offered for **MashUp**'s annual gala. The event benefits the ensemble's upcoming dance film in honor of National Women's Equality Day. BIPOC choreographers are being commissioned to develop works for the film that explore the intersection of feminism and race. Frogtown Creative Studios, 2934 Gilroy St., Frogtown; Sat., May 22, 6 p.m., $100 per guest. Info and tickets at MashUp.

MashUp. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Recent Online Encores

Just don’t call her a yentl

Matchmaking scientists with choreographers is a hallmark of choreographer Donna Sternberg’s recurring series Awe and Wonder. In his new edition, **Donna Sternberg & Dancers** focuses on climate change. The choreographers’ varied styles include tap (Gisele Silva), street dance (Leigh Foaad), classical Indian Bharata Natyam (Ramya Harishankar), and contemporary (Sternberg), paired with the science fields of rocketry (Anita Sengupta), climatology (Christine O’Connell), nursing (Sharon Cobb), and immunology (Devavani Chatterjea). The online performances include conversations with the dancemakers and scientists about what they learned about each other in the creative process. Anyone who missed the early May performances can still view the quartet of work online for $10. Info at Donna Sternberg & Dancers

Donna Sternberg & Dancers. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Dances with cars

Over three Saturdays, **Suárez Dance Theater** rolled out three short films under the banner *Mapping Our Stories.* Inspired by the histories of Black, Native and LatinX people, each film is set in a Santa Monica public space with often overlooked cultural significance (the city provided funding). Choreographer/performer **Bernard Brown** of bbmoves takes the audience from the landmark Phillips Chapel CME Church (the 1909 church was the first serving the African American Community) to the site of “Inkwell Beach” where Blacks and Browns were restricted in segregated California beaches. Acknowledging her Chumash and Tongva Nations heritage, poet/songwriter **Jessa Calderon**’s film starts overlooking the ocean from Tongva Park. The history of the Westside Classics Car Club in Santa Monica is the focus of the film from **Primera Generación Dance Collective (PGDC)** and its members Alfonso Cervera, Rosa Rodriguez-

Frazier, Irvin Manuel Gonzalez, and Patricia “Patty” Huerta. Each film has resources for further exploration and continue to screen for free at Bernard Brown/bbmoves’s “…at leisure…,” Jessa Calderon’s “Before the Noise,” Primera Generación Dance Colletive’s “low riting”

Suárez Dance Theater. Photo courtesy of Primera Generación Dance Collective (PGDC).

Oh, the places we have been

With support from three theaters, The Wallis and The Soraya in SoCal and The Harris in Chicago, **Jacob Jonas The Company** worked with more than 150 artists all over the globe to produce short dance films for the series, *Films.Dance*. Just as vaccination and pandemic restrictions start to allow travel, the 15-week dance film world tour that began in January concluded earlier this month with Emma Rosenzweig-Bock in a film co-directed by Jonas and Ireland-based Kevin McGloughlin. It joins the other 14 short films still viewable at Films.Dance.

Films.Dance. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Adding to the trove

The 2013 Ford Theater performance of *Para XaXa* marked the choreographic debut of Shelby Williams-Gonzalez. Inspired by popular Brazilian social dances xaxado and forro, the 2013 performance is the latest addition to **Viver Brasil**’s weekly online rebroadcast of a past concerts. The company’s rich repertoire reflects the company’s efforts to preserve Brasil’s African culture in dance and music. Free at Viver Brasil. The troupe also is part of KCET’s *Southland Sessions* streaming at KCET.

Viver Brasil. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Online Dance Classes

Pandemic exhaustion? Get thee to a dance class!

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. LA Dance Chronicle.

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