

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Secular Sensibilities

Ann Haskins · Wednesday, May 7th, 2025

Mothers' Day moves in Topanga Canyon; LA Phil's Boulez fest features dance downtown; Peruvian-African diaspora dance in Glendale; a ballet season closer in Santa Barbara; Chinese dance traditions in Irvine; contemporary dance in Hollywood, Pasadena, Burbank, Santa Monica, Irvine, and downtown; more SoCal dance this busy week, plus a peek at next week.

Live This Week

Together again

The LA Phil reteams with choreographer Benjamin Millepied and the dancers of **LA Dance Project** for *Rituel*, part of an LA Phil program celebrating the centennial of conductor/composer Pierre Boulez. Commissioned by LADP, the LA Phil, the Orchestre de Paris — Philharmonie, and the New York Philharmonic, Millepied's *Rituel* arrives in LA after Paris and before New York, all conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen and danced by LADP. The dancers include Lorrin Brubaker, Jeremy Coachman, Courtney Conovan, Daphne Fernberger, Shu Kinouchi, Audrey Sides, and Hope Spears. Details on other music on the program are at the website. Walt Disney Hall, 151 S. Grand Ave., downtown; Thurs. & Sat., May 8 & 10, 7:30 pm, Sun., May 11, 2 pm, \$55-\$219. [LA Phil](#).



Los Angeles Dance Project. Photo courtesy of the artists

Peruvian connections

Curated by choreographer/teacher/producer Jamie Nichols, the Brand Associates Dance Series welcomes the **Afro-Peruvian Experience Dance Co.** to its foothill galleries. For three decades, the company, led by director Nadia Calmet, has showcased the dance and music of Peru's African ancestors. Brand Library & Art Center, 1601 W. Mountain St., Glendale; Sat., May 10, 5 pm, free. [Brand Library](#).



MOMentum Place. Photo courtesy of the artist

For a certain kind of Mom

For an entertaining, halcyon alternative to crowded restaurants on Mother's Day, consider **MOMentum Place**. Taking over a stage that hosts summer Shakespeare under the oak trees, this mostly annual event offers an array of dancers, acrobats, aerialists, and other entertainers curated by Lexi Pearl. Bring a picnic or opt for the spring-themed brunch (additional \$40 charge). With restricted access from Pacific Coast Highway, the best route is from the San Fernando Valley side. Theatricum Botanicum, 1419 N. Topanga Canyon Blvd., Topanga Canyon; Sun., May 11, Optional brunch — noon — 1:30 pm \$40; performance – 2 pm, \$45, \$35 students/seniors, \$15 children 12 & under; [Will Geer Theatricum Botanicum](#).



Milka Djordjević. Photo courtesy of the artist

Bob and weave

Dancer/choreographer **Milka Djordjević** also brings her composer chops to *Bob*, exploring algorithmic movement patterns and the labor of the dancing body. Part of the Wonmi Warehouse series. The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, 152 N. Central Ave., Little Tokyo; Fri., May 9, 7:30 pm, Sat., May 10, 4 pm, \$12. [MOCA](#).



Benita Bike's DanceArt. Photo by Dean Wallraff

Decoding dance

After last month's proscenium theater performance, **Benita Bike's DanceArt** resumes its minimally staged events in non-traditional venues including parks and libraries. The informal programs entertain and explain how dance is made. Dancers include Sarah Chan, Lauren Gold, Dakota Merritt, Dalya Modlin, and Emily Wallace. Buena Vista Branch Library, 300 N. Buena Vista St., Burbank; Wed., May 14, 7 pm, free. [Benita Bikes Danceart Company](#).



BODYTRAFFIC. Photo courtesy of the artists

Continued reminders

Continuing its SoCal tour of *This Reminds Me of You*, the splendid dancers of **BODYTRAFFIC** head south with a three part program. Trey McIntyre's *Mayday* set to Buddy Holly's songs, Matthew Neenan's *I Forgot the Start*, and Joan Rodriguez' Cuban infused *Bloquea'o* completes the triptych. Irvine Barclay Theatre, UC Irvine, 4242 Campus Dr., Irvine; Thurs., May 15, 8 pm, \$44-\$109. [Irvine Barclay](#).

Terpsichorean triptych

A trio of dance theater works take the stage as the **Nancy Evans Dance Theatre** presents *Works 2025: Bound*. The modern dance works include choreographer and artistic director Nancy Evans Doede's *Vigil* considering the ripple effects of a tragic accident, the premiere of Ashleigh Doede's *In-Yun* inspired by the Korean belief that even the briefest encounters are shaped by past lives, and guest artist Cheryl Banks-Smith joins Nancy Evans Doede for *Parallel Universe*, an improvisational collaboration. ARC Pasadena (A Room to Create), 1158 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena; Sat., May 10 & 17, 8 pm, Sun., May 11 & 18, 4 pm, \$30-\$100, \$25 students/seniors. [Nancy Evans Dance Theatre](#).



Nancy Evans Dance Theatre. Photo courtesy of the artists

Spectrum widening

The Altadena-based **LA Unbound** offers non-competitive performance opportunities with events that showcase the range of SoCal dance genres. Their *Spring Show* promises an array of dance from contemporary to hip hop, ballet to tap. Mainstage Theatre, Glendale Community College, 1601 E. Mountain Ave., Glendale; Sat., May 10, 4 & 7:30 pm, \$20-\$30, [Tickets](#).

Beachside ballet

For the finale of a season celebrating its 30th anniversary, Santa Barbara's **State Street Ballet** partners with the Opera Santa Barbara Orchestra for *The Brilliance Program*. The dancers present George Balanchine's Gershwin-infused *Who Cares?*, along with Gerald Arpino's *Birthday Variations* set to ballet music from Verdi's operas. A new work from contemporary choreographer Kassandra Taylor rounds out the program. Lobero Theatre, 33 E. Canon Perdido St., Santa Barbara; Fri., May 9, 7:30 pm, Sat., May 10, 2 pm, \$35-\$65, \$24 students/children. [Lobero Theatre](#).



State Street Ballet. Photo courtesy of the artists

Masked man

His head encased in a horned, bovidae-suggestive mask, a naked **Paul Donald** explores masculinity as he navigates wooden set pieces in his solo performance *In Grain*. Highways Performance Space, 1651 18th St., Santa Monica; Fri., May 9, 8 pm, \$25, \$20 students/seniors. [Highways](#).

Into the house

This performance organization is known for its distinctive programs that bring an audience into a residence or other physical structure where performing artists have created movement specifically for that site. Not surprisingly, the site of this fundraising performance is a historic home designed in 1941 by architect Rudolph Schindler with his signature post and beam construction. Performances by Genna Moroni, Emily Marchand, Christina Burchard, Susan Barbour, Joe Berry, and Kelly Loudenberg are accompanied by brunch, silent auction, and the other usual friend/fundraiser options. Rodriguez House, 2567 Glendower Ave., Glendale; Sat., May 10, 11 am-2 pm. \$200-\$350. [Garden Party – A benefit for homeLA](#).



Home/LA at Rodriguez House. Photo courtesy of the artists

Three from China

Three tales, including the source for a Disney movie, are told in the original musical *Legends* from the **Chinese Dance Company of Southern California**. The dancers are joined by a live orchestra to tell three Chinese tales employing Beijing opera, aerial acrobatics, and martial arts, backed by music from rock to classical incorporating traditional instruments. Audiences may be familiar with *Mulan* from the Disney movies and how, disguised as a man, she took her father's place in the army. Less familiar are *Nezha*, who battles a dragon to save his village, and *The Monkey King*, telling of a mischievous monkey's evolution to power. Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa; Sun., May 11, 4 pm, \$33.90-\$101.70. [SCFTA](#).

Who needs CGI?

Jaw-dropping puppetry anchors **The Life of Pi**, the theatrical retelling of Yann Martel's best-selling novel about a 16-year old shipwreck survivor adrift in a lifeboat with four animals, notably a Bengal tiger. Nick Barnes and Finn Caldwell created the puppetry for the original, Olivier award-winning British production that went on to Broadway and won several Tony awards. Anyone who sniffs that puppetry isn't dance or choreography should watch the multiple actors tightly orchestrated manipulations as well as the puppet's choreographed moves, and then just shush up. Everyone else can sit back and marvel. Music Center, Ahmanson Theatre, 135 N. Grand Ave., downtown; Tues.-Fri., 8 pm, Sat., 2 & 8 pm, Sun., 1 & 6 pm, also Thurs., May 29, 2 pm, thru Sun., June 1. \$37.95 -\$166.75 (w/fees). [CTG](#).



Psychopomp. Photo courtesy of the artists

They are bend-y

The acrobatic dance company **Psychopomp** provides the performance component of this event exploring Jewish folklore and community. In *Der Golem*, the dancers reconsider the Jewish mythological and culturally ubiquitous creature of the Golem. Fiesta Hall, Plummer Park 1166 N. Vista Street West Hollywood; Thurs., May 15, 7 pm, \$23.02. [Psychopomp](#).

Seasonal signs

It is spring and time for the annual **CalArts Spring Dance** as the graduating class presents a range of choreography from Trisha Brown (a restaging of her *Glacial Decoy* with sets and costumes by Robert Rauschenberg), and commissions from Genna Moroni, Omar Ramón de Jesús, and an alum contribution from Jobel Medina. REDCAT, Disney Hall, 621 W. 2nd St., downtown; Tues.-Wed., May 13-14, 8:30 pm, \$20. [REDCAT](#).



Genna Moroni and G.U.M. Photo by Denise Leitner

The last move

Choreographer **Marissa Herrera** set the moves for hip hop infused *The Last Play* by *Rickérby Hinds*. The play, written by Hinds and directed by Daphnie Sicre, was commissioned by the Latino Theater Company. The action follows an Afro-Latino playwright as he conjures characters from previous plays, seeking inspiration for what he believes will be his final play. What could possibly go wrong? The Los Angeles Theatre Center, 514 S. Spring St., downtown; Thurs.-Sat., 8 pm, Sun., 4 pm, thru Sun., May 25, \$10 (Thursdays), \$48, \$24 students/seniors/veterans/LAUSD teachers w/ ID. [Latino Theater Company at The Los Angeles Theatre Center](#).

Lorca lore

Directed and choreographed by Deborah Colker, **LA Opera's** *Ainadamar* draws on Flamenco and Spanish dance as well as a libretto by David Henry Hwang to recount poet/playwright Federico Garcia Lorca's last days. The opera takes its title from the site where Lorca was executed as part of Spanish dictator Francisco Franco's reign of terror after the Spanish civil war to eliminate artists whose work opposed Franco's dictatorship. Music Center, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 135 N. Grand Ave., downtown; Thurs., May 15, 7:30 pm, Sun., May 18, 2 pm, \$32.50- \$296. [LA Opera](#).



LA Opera's "Ainadamar." Photo by Marty Sohl

Greek roots

Choreographer/dancer **Esther Mira** is part of the creative team and also dances in the cast of *Hellas*, written and directed by Christopher William Johnson. This new play surveys the Greek roots of western civilization, complete with dance and fight choreography. The saga is presented in part on Fridays, while Saturday and Sunday offer the full marathon production. The Broadwater Mainstage, 1076 Lillian Way, Hollywood; Fri., 7:30 pm, Sat.-Sun, 2 pm, thru May 11, \$25-\$30, \$20-\$25 students. [Tickets](#).

A Peek at Next Week: (May 16 to 22)

Steven Atwater & Thomas Ford — *In Search of an Exit* at Sierra Madre Playhouse, 87 W. Sierra Madre Blvd., Sierra Madre; Sat.-Sun., May 17-18, 7:30 pm, \$12-\$35. [Sierra Madre Playhouse](#).

State Ballet Theatre of Ukraine — *Sleeping Beauty* at Saban Theatre, 8440 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills, Sat., May 17, 6 pm, \$65.96-\$105.90. [Tickets](#). Also at Long Beach Performing Arts Center, Terrace Theater, 300 E. Ocean Blvd., Long Beach; Sun., May 18, 2 & 7 pm, \$58-\$160. [Ticketmaster](#).

Mark Morris Dance Group — *Pepperland* at Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills; Fri., May 16, 7:30 pm, Sat., May 17, 2 & 7:30 pm, Sun., May 18, 2 pm, \$64-\$141.90. [The Wallis](#).



Mark Morris Dance Group. Photo by Gareth Jones

MashUp Contemporary Dance Company — *Open Mic* at Frogtown Studios, 2828 Gilroy St., Frogtown; Sat., May 17, 7 pm, \$15. [MashUp](#).

Volta Collective — *Loneliness Triptych: Excerpt* at the Brand Library & Art Center, 1601 W. Mountain St., Glendale; Sat., May 17, 5 pm, free. [Brand Library](#).

Okinawa Association of America — *UTAYABIRA, WUDUYABIRA (Let's Sing, Let's Dance)* at James R. Armstrong Theatre, 3330 Civic Center Dr., Torrance; Sun., May 18, 2 pm, \$30. [Ticket request](#).

Kayamanan Ng Lahi Philippine Folk Arts at Sierra Madre Playhouse, 87 W. Sierra Madre Blvd., Sierra Madre; Sat., May 17, 11 am, \$12-\$35 (sold out, but waitlist at website). [Contact](#).

Orange County Dance Festival at HB Art Center, 538 Main St., #98, Huntington Beach; Sat., May 17, 2 to 8 pm, \$10-\$100 (donation). [AKOMIDANCE](#).



OC Dance Festival's AkomiDance. Photo by Vytas Barauskas

Jingqiu Guan — *Where Are We Going Now?* at Highways Performance Space, 1651 18th St., Santa Monica; Fri.-Sat., May 16-17, 8 pm, \$25, \$20. [Highways](#).

LA Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) — *Endurance* at LA Dance Project, 2245 E. Washington Blvd., Arts District; Fri.-Sat., May 16-17, 7 pm, free w/reservation at [Eventbrite](#).

Global Motion at the Broad Stage, 1310 11th St., Santa Monica; Sat., May 17, 7:30 pm, \$23, \$20 students. [Tickets](#).

Los Angeles Ballet — *Gala 2025* at Beverly Wilshire Hotel, 9500 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills; Sat., May 17, 6:30 pm, \$1,000-\$100,000. [Gala 2025 | Los Angeles Ballet](#).

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