Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Something to Splash About

Ann Haskins · Wednesday, April 7th, 2021

Live dance at Union Station, new Monday dance films, an artistic director debut, incarcerated dancing, LA dance icon goes YouTube, plus online encores, where to take online dance classes, and more SoCal dance this week.

This Week

Summoning

The year of the pandemic has brought several highly polished filmed dance ventures and a recent change of leadership for **LA Contemporary Dance Company**. *Summons*, the first work from the new artistic director Jamila Glass premiered last week with dancers Hyosun Choi, Kate Coleman, Shauna Davis, Nicole Hagen, Kenzie McClure, Drea Sobke, Carissa Songhorian, Tiffany Sweat, Gigi Todisco, and Angel Tyson. The dance film continues to screen for a modest charge of $5, joining prior films plus info on the new artistic director, classes, and other activities at their website.

LA Contemporary Dance Company. Photo by Taso Papadakis

If this is Monday, where are we this week?

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*. Pandemic restrictions still preclude travel but for 15 weeks that started January 25, a new film takes viewers to a different world destination each Monday until May 3. The films screen for free. For Week 12 Mexico City-based Diego Mur created *Xeno* on Canadian circus-artists Natasha Patterson and Sabine van Rensburg. Still viewable are *GALOPE* set in Spain with New York's Gonzalo Garcia, *Sit Still* with seven-year-old Canadian Krumper Adeline Kerry Cruz, *Same Sky* danced by Jacob Jonas The Company, *ANOTHER SERIOUS DANCE FILM* in New York with ballerina Sara Mearns, *Dadu* set in the Dutch hamlet of Spaarnwoude, *?? – NOW* with BeijingDance/LDTX company dancer Li Kehua (Lico), *Edging Normal* with dancer Desmond Richardson, *Match* bringing five choreographers and 46 dancers drawn from 20 countries in a scene-shifting world tour, *Pássaro Distante* from Brasil, *Toke* spotlighting Danish-born dancer Toke Broni Strandby in London locales, and *Kaduna* filmed in Nigeria. Mon., 9 a.m., free. New additions each Monday to May 3. Info on the full line-up of 15 films and free subscriptions at Films.Dance, The Wallis, The Soraya.

Gonzalo García. Photo courtesy of Films.dance

Making it work

Choreographer **Suchi Branfman** has a long-history and burnished reputation for her work with and about the incarcerated. As part of a five year residency at a medium security prison in Norco, Branfman involved inmates in weekly sessions of dance and choreography. With the Covid–19 shutdown, plans shifted from live sessions to inmates submitting choreographic ideas in writing. Branfman turned the ideas over to choreographers Jay Carlon, Bernard Brown, Tom Tsai, Bri Mims and Irvin Gonzalez who had all worked with Branfman in the pre-pandemic prison sessions. The six dancemakers translated those written choreographic ideas into movement that has been filmed with narration provided by several former inmates. The result, *Undanced Dances Through Prison Walls During a Pandemic*, screens in two parts, the first this Friday and part two on April

16. The written choreography ideas were published in December 2020, sold out, and the second printing is forthcoming. Fri., Apr. 16, 6:30 PDT, free at 18th Street Arts Center.

Undanced Dances Through Prison Walls During a Pandemic. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Seeing the Site

Four choreographers have divvied up the Thursdays in April, taking turns bringing performance to a different corner of downtown's Union station. Each site specific program will bring a personal movement practice including Cunningham technique, meditative dance house dance, and theater. The quartet includes Joy Angela, Chard Gonzalez, Emiko Sugiyama, and Jay Carlon, House Dance. thru Thur., Apr. 22, 7 p.m., free. Details and registration at PIETER.

Emiko Sugiyama. Photo courtesy of Pieter.

About that drought

In its new dance film *somos agua: a collective honoring of our mama agua*, LA-based dance troupe **Contra-Tiempo** explores issues of water, equitable urban planning, and art-making. The film reflects the company and its artistic director Ana Maria Alvarez' long involvement with urban issues and underserved communities. The premiere zoom screening is followed by a discussion on the issues. Mon., Apr. 12, 6 p.m., free with reservation at USC Visions & Voices.

Contra-Tiempo. Photo courtesy of the artists

Binge dancing

Much has been written about the struggle for dancers whose work is predicated on moving to cope without live performance. In collaboration with 16 dancers from Hunter College, **Monica Bill Barnes & Company** developed *Keep Moving*. Delivered in ten chapters that can be watched one at a time or perhaps mini-marathon? Conceived and created by Barnes and Robbie Saenz, the dancers include Manuela Agudelo, Olivia Brown, Kai Chen, Anakeiry Cruz, SarahIsoke Days, Katherine De La Cruz, Grace Deane, Nadjie Forte, Reagan Gordon, Kathryn McKenzie, Naja Newell, Esther Nozea, Amanda Konstantine Perlmutter, Julieta Rodriguez-Cruz, Lina Sierra, and Jessica Son. The chapters vary in length with some videos and others audio only. Free, but advanced reservation is required to receive viewing instructions 24 hours before showtime. Streaming now thru Sun., Apr. 11 with reservation at CAP UCLA.

Monica Bill Barnes & Company. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Still the Bella the ball

Like her seamless dancing, Bella Lewitzy moved from her initial role as choreographer Lester Horton's muse to assume the mantle of mother of so much dance in Los Angeles. A dancer who embodied Horton's technique, film clips captured the seemingly boneless flow of movement through her body, technique she passed onto several generations of dancers through her teaching, at the helm of her eponymous company, and as a passionate advocate for Los Angeles as an under-appreciated center of dance. There is a documentary getting its final polish, but a new YouTube channel has a preview of the upcoming film and much more. YouTube.

Bella Lewitzsky. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Online Encores

Song and dance

Dancer Lateef Williams joins mezzo-soprano Raehann Bryce-Davis in the premiere of *Brown Sounds*, a digital short by Jérémy Adonis. Filmed on location in a lush Belgian garden, the project is the opening collaborative effort from **LA Opera**, the African American Art Song Alliance, Aural Compass Projects, Black Opera Alliance, National Association of Negro Musicians and the **Philadelphia Dance Company**. Free. Viewing details at LA Opera.

Lateef Williams. Photo courtesy of the artist.

For now until then

Originally from Orange County, Skylar Campbell's ballet career took him to the National Ballet of Canada. Last year, his nascent chamber company **Skylar Campbell Dance Collective** was booked for a June debut at The Barclay Theater. Drawing dancers on hiatus from New York City Ballet, Boston Ballet and National Ballet of Canada, when the pandemic shutdown live performance here, the debut instead was online from Canada . The Barclay still plans to present the ensemble when live performance resumes, but for now, the venue announced SCDC's three-part dance film *Traveler* with original music by OC's Josiah Johnson. Free. Part one with Campbell and Jackie Oakley, Part two with Ben Rudisin and Calley Skalnik, Part three with Hannah Fischer, Rudisin, Oakley, Skalnik, and Campbell. After last week's premiere, the three parts are at Skylar Campbell Dance Collective.

Skylar Campbell. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Three to present one

Three theaters joined forces in early March to present a free performance by flamenco artist Israel Galván in *Maestro de Barra*. Reviewers have described Galvan as a master at capturing the fiery spirit and quicksilver footwork of this percussive art form without dancing into movement clichés. Moving outside traditional confines of flamenco, Galván has collaborated with jazz musician Pat Metheny and contemporary choreographer Akram Khan. Kudos to the three presenters, especially UCLA's Center for the Art of Performance (CAP UCLA) which continues to offer the performance thru May 31. Info and free access at CAP UCLA.

Israel Galván. Photo by Nicolas Serve.

Dancin' around LA

In the absence of touring companies inside its theaters, the Music Center is giving a little love and attention to LA's dance companies as part of the series *For The Love Of L.A.* filmed in different parts of the city. A recent addition offers **Kyoko Takenaka**'s martial arts-infused movement. She joins **Brianna Mims** performing in Leimert Park, **Versa-Style Dance Company**'s street dancers at the beach, folkloric troupe **Pacifico Dance Company** at nine different locations representing different areas of Mexico, the tap group **Syncopated Ladies** on a downtown rooftop, **Rangoli Dance Company** celebrating a South Asian goddess, Albertossy Espinoza's **LA Fusion Dance Theater** with Flamenco fusion duet, and Pat Taylor's **Jazz Antiqua Dance & Music Ensemble** in

parks, alleys, and an empty business street. Free online at Music Center.

Versa-Style Dance Company – “Flow Within” – Photo courtesy of The Music Center

Son rearing

Drawing its title and subject matter from Clint Smith’s poem “How to Raise a Son,” the poet gives voice to his words as the camera follows dancer Dennzyl Green. A current member of the **Nannette Brodie Dance Theatre**, Green performs and shares choreography credit with Brodie. The film is the latest contribution from NBDT and the South Coast Dance Alliance. Free online on Vimeo.

Nannette Brodie Dance Theatre’s Dennzyl Green. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Is there a sequel?

Originally staged in 2016 to sold out audiences, **Invertigo Dance Theatre**’s *After It Happened* joins the Ford Theaters video line up of encore performances. Set in the aftermath of a natural disaster, the work considers how a community rebuilds and scavenges for signs of hope and resilience. With the current tragic pandemic possibly headed toward containment, *After It Happened* offers a thoughtful consideration through dance that suggests ways to create and build a new normal. Free with reservation at The Ford or Invertigo Dance Theatre.

Invertigo Dance Theatre. Photo by Joe Lambie.

Taking to the air(waves)

The SoCal contemporary ballet and aerial company **Luminario Ballet** has posted links to recent performances and also announced it has a new dance film coming sooon. The films are free at Luminario Ballet.

Luminario Ballet. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Mask breathing

Over the past year, choreographer Melissa Barak and her contemporary **Barak Ballet** shifted online several fine filmed performances, a virtual gala, and its own instagram channel. Some of the films are free at their website and Instagram.

Barak Ballet. Photo courtesy of the artists.

A show of force

One of the most powerful filmed efforts from last year remains *This is Me – Letters from the Front Lines* from **Diavolo Architecture in Motion** and its **Veterans Project**. The film's insights remain painfully true as military veterans who now are first responders confront what it means to be a warrior on the front lines of a pandemic as they gymnastically inhabit a world of pipes and moving structures while articulating the personal and professional realities of being on the front line of Covid-19. Diavolo.

Diavolo Veterans Project. Photo by George Simian.

Locking it up

Early in the pandemic, the street dance troupe **Versa-Style Dance Company** displayed a natural affinity to online streaming of performances and classes. The most recent film, *Ending The Year With Hope*, continues online and the company has a video filmed at the beach as part of the Music Center's *For the Love of LA* series. The company's YouTube channel hosts performance videos and videos on a range of life-skills subjects geared to young adults, but with pointers for all ages. Info and videos on YouTube and Versa-Style website.

Versa-Style Dance. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Post-grad dancing

Performances by Santa Monica College's two resident companies, **Synapse Contemporary Dance Theater** and **Global Motion World Dance Company,** stream for free at SMC.

Synapse Contemporary Dance Theater. Photo courtesy of the artists.

The past keeps on keeping on

While the theatre itself remains closed, the Ford continues several online series showcasing past dance and music performances. The array of local dance companies in the line up reflects how the

beloved al fresco venue functioned as an informal summer dance festival showcasing the energy and diversity in SoCal dance. Look for contemporary from Lula Washington Dance Theatre, street dance from Versa-Style Dance, Brazilian from Viver Brasil, plus traditional and contemporary folkloric dance from Grandeza Mexicano Folk Ballet Company, Pacifico Dance Company, the LA Phil's exploration of Tovaangar Today with dancer Ba'ac Garcia, and contemporary South Asian, Bollywood and Bhangra dance from Achinta S. McDaniel and her Blue13. All free. Complete calendar and information at The Ford.

Lula Washington Dance Theatre. Photo courtesy of the artists.

An international dozen

A dozen dancers working remotely from three continents developed a series of short videos presented by **Nancy Evans Dance Theatre** under the banner *The Channels*. The company also added a new installment of *Figures of Speech*, new dance works inspired by literature. Free at Nancy Evans Dance Theatre.

House dancing

The pandemic caught Pasadena's **Lineage Dance Company** in the midst of construction of its new Lineage Performing Arts Center as well as figuring out how to offer classes and performance in a pandemic. The construction is finished and the dance company has scored with several videos including its most recent staged in Pasadena's iconic Gamble House. Videos free online at Lineage.

Lineage Dance. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Unexpected curriculum addition

The dance department at **Cal State University Long Beach** is among those shifting online videos to new dance channels on You Tube while also streaming two performances with dancers observing strict Covid-19 protocols. Those performances and more are free on YouTube.

CSULB Dance. Photo by Gregory RR Crosby.

Alone with others watching

Not content to simply be online with filmed dance, the site specific performance ensemble **Heidi Duckler Dance** launched its 35th anniversary with live walk-up or drive performances at sites throughout L.A. An array of projects and films can be found at Heidi Duckler Dance.

Heidi Duckler Dance. Photo by Kelly Stuart

The movement and the music

Choreographer Pat Taylor’s work for her **JazzAntiqua Dance and Music Ensemble** ranges from pure celebration of the music to thoughtful considerations of the fight against racism and injustice. Videos stream for free at the JazzAntiqua website and YouTube.

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

Multi-screens

With a new weekly online broadcast of a past performance, classes, workshops, and conversations, **Viver Brasil** was among the earliest LA dance companies to shift online and continues as one of the most active with videos, classes, workshops and more. Viver Brasil. The troupe also is part of KCET's *Southland Sessions* streaming at KCET.

Viver Brasil. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Is it a question?

During the initial Covid–19 shutdown, 15 dancemakers created 90-second solos reflecting the range of reactions to the shelter-in-place order last spring. All 15 are collected in Emily Mast and Yehuda Duenyas' project *HOW ARE WE* . Stream for free on Vimeo.

Carlon. Photo courtesy of the artists.

More in the lunchbox

Live streamed performances continue intermittently but REDCAT's instagram channel offers a collection of prior dance performances including **Genna Moroni**, **Tzong-Han Wu**, and **Rosanna Gamson/World Wide**. Free at Instagram Channel.

Genna Moroni. Photo by Silvia Grav.

Moving Offstage

The *Music Center Offstage* continues to stream new and encore video clips and performances. Visitors include Cuba's Malpaso Dance Company and Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch, local troupes include Jung Im Lee Korean Dance Academy, Kayamanan Ng Lahi Philippine Folk Arts, and Infinite Flow. Music Center.

Ballet Hispanico. Photo by Paula Lobo.

When one was not enough

Last June's four-part **BlakTinx Dance Festival** presented choreography from 20 Black and Latino dancemakers. All four programs continue for free online on YouTube.

BlakTinx. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Live music, virtual dance

Dance continues to be part of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra's 20-21 online season, including dancer/choreographer **Shauna Davis** in the premiere of composer/musician Derrick Spiva Jr.'s two part work *Mind The Rhythm*. LACO's music director Jaime Martin conducts. Link to free performance at LACO.

Shauna Davis. Photo by Chris Emile.

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.

Dance classes listed on LA Dance Chronicle.

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