Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Taking It Online and Outdoors

Ann Haskins · Wednesday, September 16th, 2020

In a week that mega-smoke clouds from west coast forest fires turned the skies orange in three states and made breathing, let alone dancing problematic, dance still persists. A surfside festival goes viral, a live performance returns in West Hollywood, a new ballet company debuts online, live drive-in duets in a downtown parking lot, more streamed performances and chances to dance, all this week in SoCal dance.

Taking it from the pier

Usually one of SoCal's September delights is the annual **San Pedro Festival of the Arts**, an outdoor fest with several stages hosting an array of professional, community and student dance groups. With the pandemic making even al fresco gatherings risky, organizer Louise Reichlin found ways and funding to move the 14-year old festival online with two separate programs. Participants include AkomiDance, San Pedro City Ballet, Alan L Perez, Cathartic Dance, Jose Costas Contempo Ballet, Pranamya Suri, Re:borN Dance Interactive, WestMet Classical Training, Tonia Shimin, Degas Dance Studio, Brittany Woo and UC Irvine students, Barkin/Selissen Project, Emergent Dance Company, MixedeMotion Theatrix, and host company Louise Reichlin & Dancers/La Choreographers & Dancers. Sat.-Sun., Sept. 19–20, free. Detailed program schedule at https://triartsp.com/. Stream on Vimeo.

San Pedro Dance Festival. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Because a pandemic needs a new dance company

A new contemporary ballet company **LA Dance Moves** debuts online with two works choreographed for the company by artistic director Nancy Paradis and resident choreographer Chasen Greenwood. The young company is starting with seven dancers including Greenwood and Los Angeles Ballet alum Chelsea Paige Johnson. Info on the company and dancers at LA Dance Moves. Trailer for the show and tickets for the livestream on Sat., Sept. 19, 6 p.m. PDT, $7.95 at Ballet Project TV.

LA Dance Moves. Photo by Rachidla Piz.

Changed a bit since March

Originally scheduled to run through the month of March, **Chris Emile**'s *AMEND* was suspended

with the Covid–19 shelter-in-place order. One of the founders of No)One. Art House, Emile's consideration of race and male identity is even more timely now than in March. After reopening last week, the site specific event continues for six more performances, again as a live event but with the addition of pandemic safety precautions. The audience for each performance is limited to ten. The audience will view the performance from outside the Schindler House with masks and social distancing required for all audience members. MAK Center's Schindler House, 833 N. Kings Rd., West Hollywood; Sat., Sept. 19, & 26, at 2, 3 & 4 p.m., free with reservation. MAK Center.

Chris Emile. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Come Saturday morning

Employing movement, multi-media art, and poetry **José Richard Aviles** contributes two segments to Grand Park's virtual *Easy Mornings* series. Reprising their debut solo show, in *Callejera* (Spanish for "woman of the street"), Aviles pays homage to growing up in South Central LA as a self-described "Queer Brown Boi" including references to time spent on LA bus lines. The second scheduled work *En Movimiento* is intended as a platform for resistance and community. The program is just part of the new Saturday morning series that includes yoga sessions, food demos, art activities, and conversation, all packed into the one hour sessions on Sat., Sept., 19, 26 & Oct. 3, 10 a.m., free. Streaming on YouTube.

Jose Richard Aviles. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Different takes from India

SoCal has an impressive community of dancers, teachers and companies that have introduced audiences here to the varied styles of dance rooted in different geographical and cultural areas of South Asian. While the **Indo-American Arts Council (IAAC)**'s annual dance festival traditionally is focused on New York, its 12th festival takes a more international approach as it joins the rank of online festivals with a *Virtual Erasing Borders Dance Festival*. With the virtual format, the organizers have assembled an impressive sampling of India's many dance forms with eleven artists from around the world. Here is a chance to explore the many directions dance from India has taken. Details on each performer in the different programs at IAAC. Programs online Sun.-Sun., Sept. 20–27, 5:30 p.m. (PDT) through Eventbrite.

Indo-American Arts Council Festival. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Two to choose from

Just as the pandemic has revitalized the concept of the drive-in movie, drive in dance is a new model. Jacob Jonas and his troupe The Company made the first move with a social distance performance in a Santa Monica parking lot. Out of its internal discussions LA Dance Project is traveling in a similar direction with Drive-In Dances. The initial offering *Solo at Dusk* (October 13 and 14: 7:30 pm and 9 pm; October 15 – 18: 730 pm; October 21: 7:30 pm and 9 pm; October 22 – 25: 7:30 pm ; October 28-31: 7:30 and 9 pm; November 1: 6 pm and 7:30 pm; November 4 – 7: 7:30 pm and 9 pm; November 8: 6 pm and 7:30 pm) features dancers **Bobbi Jene Smith** and **Or Schraiber**. The two were paired in the film Bobbi Jene. That program is followed by *The Betweens*

(November 12 -14: 7:30 pm and 9 pm; November 17 – 22: 7:30 pm and 9 pm) with **Jermaine Spivey** and Spenser Theberge. Spivey was guest faculty at the USC Kaufman School of Dance and known for his work with Crystal Pite where Theberge also was connected in addition to working with Spivey. Location information and Covid–19 safety protocols to be provided late. $100-$150 per car (top price includes a one-year LADP digital membership). Info and tickets at LADP.

Jermaine Spivey. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Encore Online

Marking the day it began

Just before the pandemic changed so much about performance in general and hand-held cell phone videos changed the specific conversation about policing and systemic racism, a visit from Washington D.C.-based **Step Afrika!** marked Black History month. The troupe's dancers and musicians specialize in percussive dance forms, traced from traditional rhythms adapted to the human body when drums were denied. The troupe doesn't miss a beat as the dancers move from the traditional to exuberant contemporary beatboxing. The Soroya which was the host venue for that February performance teams with the company for the virtual premiere of Stono, marking the 281st anniversary of the first US slave rebellion that began on the banks of South Carolina's Stono River on Sept. 9, 1739. The premiere of Stono streams Wed., Sept. 9, 5 p.m.PDT. Register at Eventbrite. Info on post premiere streaming at Step Afrika!.

Step Afrika! Photo by Torrey Allen.

Wonder who's watching

Drawing inspiration from the travails of Orpheus and Eurydice as well as from East German author Christa Wolf's short story about being under surveillance by the Stasi police choreographer Heidi Duckler and her eponymous Heidi Duckler crafted a tale of life behind the iron curtain. Titled *What Remains*, the work was aptly presented in the garden of a museum dedicated to the cold war and was presented in conjunction with the museum's exhibit *The Medea Insurrection: Radical Women Artists Behind the Iron Curtain*. The filmed event takes on new life with an online screening plus a discussion with the museum's chief curator Joes Segal. Wende Museum.

Heidi Duckler Dance. Photo courtesy of the artists.

A digital Ford

Among the subtle and not so subtle changes of new management by the LA Phil, what used to be the Ford Theater is now The Ford and while the theatre itself remains closed, four digital series were announced through the end of the year. A quartet of festivals includes mostly music, but one in November is focused on dance. The Saturday morning family dance classes includes lots of dance and the streaming of past performances reflects how well the theater served as an informal summer dance festival. Up this week, a prior Ford show by **Lula Washington Dance Theater** on Thurs., Sept. 24. Facebook. All events are free. Complete calendar and information at the Ford.

Lula Washington Dance Theater. Photo courtesy of the artists.

A show of force

In what may prove a timely, if unnerving 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 Heim 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 hosted this event as part of the theater's *Fridays at 4* series. Info at https://www.thesoraya.org/.

Diavolo Veterans Project. Photo by George Simian.

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.

LA Contemporary Dance Company. Photo by Nathan Kim.

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.

Iris Company. Photo courtesy of the artists.

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**. https://ingdance.kr/22.

BrockusRED. Photo by Denise Leitner.

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. https://vimeo.com/441671503.

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

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.

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

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. 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.

Viver Brasil. 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.

Carlon. Photo courtesy of the artist.

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 joins the 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.

Dohee Lee. Photo by Pak Han.

Moving 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/.

Malpaso Dance Company. Photo by Bill Hebert.

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.

BlakTinx. 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, 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. With the five minute final cut 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.

Jacob Jonas The Company. 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 know in SoCal, but both Greene and Maxwell are on the Chapman College dance faculty and the focus of *Always a Dancer*. The live interview included several clips of Maxwell dancing and then commenting on the role, the choreography, and the choreographer. Sadly, only still photos were available for Greene's work for Lewitzky. The conversation and visuals are facilitated 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.

Sean Greene. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Alone with a chandelier

The site specific performance ensemble **Heidi Duckler Dance** has been actively exploring the possibilities in combining live and virtual performance. Earlier this summer, *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 Lavallee, Nicole Flores, Maureen Asic, Magdalena Edwards, Jessica Emmanuel, Jaeme Velez, David Guerra, and Paula Rebelo. Vimeo. Video of the full zoomed performance.

Heidi Duckler Dance. 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 and streaming at https://barakballet.org/ and Facebook.

Barak Ballet. Photo by Djeneba Aduayom.

Locking it up

Paying tribute to Don Campbellock, 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/.

Versa Style Dance. Versa

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 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.

Akomi Dance. Photo by Vytas Barauskas.

Don't get burned

Luminario Ballet is known for its blending of aerial and ballet. The company released a rehearsal video of dancers Kelly Vittetoe and Jonathan Sharp in a segment *Firebird* choreographed by artistic director Judith Flex Helle. On YouTube.

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 *Pandemania*, 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

Clear out a corner & shake a leg!

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. https://www.ladancechronicle.com.

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