

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Tchaikovsky Goes Two Ways

Ann Haskins · Wednesday, January 1st, 2020

Kwanzaa celebrated in Crenshaw, spiteful swans soar to Tchaikovsky downtown, a final Nutcracker cracking Tchaikovsky in Redondo Beach and Viennese waltz in the New Year in Costa Mesa and Hollywood in this week's SoCal dance.

4. Last Nutcracker standing

Set in 1912, the **Los Angeles Ballet's** "*Nutcracker*" is an L.A. original, choreographed by company co-artistic directors Thordal Christensen and Colleen Neary, with set design by L.A. artist Catherine Kanner. Now in its 14th season, L.A.'s own professional classical ballet company continues to demonstrate how well it understands this city. This year the company performed in Cerritos, Glendale, Westwood, Hollywood (with a live orchestra) and wraps up this weekend in Redondo Beach, bringing ballet to the audience rather than expecting folks to overcome hours of gridlocked traffic. The superb company dancers have proven themselves a home team to root for. In full disclosure, your scribe volunteered to watch the goings on from a chimney. Info and tickets at <https://www.LosAngelesBallet.org>. Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center, 1935 Manhattan Beach Blvd., Redondo Beach; Sat., Dec. 28, noon & 5 p.m., Sun., Dec. 29, noon, \$34-\$109, 10% discount for children, students, seniors & military. 310-998-7782, <https://www.LosAngelesBallet.org>.



Los Angeles Ballet "*Nutcracker*". Photo by Reed Hutchinson.

3. Beginning to look a lot like Kwanzaa

Christmas, Chanukah and all those Nutcracker ballets may be drawing to an end, but **Lula Washington Dance Theatre** has one more winter celebration to share before the new year. For almost 40 years, choreographer Lula Washington and her respected contemporary dance company's *Kwanzaa Celebration* has been closely associated with the African American community. Kwanzaa began in L.A. and its attention to values of children, family, and community are cause for all to celebrate. The show includes dance and drumming honoring the various values Kwanzaa focuses on over the festival's several days. This year, the opening show includes a fundraising dinner. Lula Washington Dance Theatre studio, 3773 Crenshaw Blvd., Baldwin Hills; Fri., Dec. 27, 6 p.m., \$100, Sat., Dec. 28, 2:30 p.m. & 7:30 p.m., Sun., Dec. 29, 2:30 p.m., \$35, \$25 students, children & seniors, 800-838-3006. <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/4439352>.



Lula Washington Dance Theatre's "Kwanzaa Celebration 2019."

2. Empire Envy

While many cultures revel in ringing out the old year, leave it to the 19th century's Austro-Hungarian empire to set a European standard on how to do it right. In Vienna's famous *Neujahrskonzert* (New Year's Concert), dancers from the Vienna Opera Ballet perform in one of Vienna's elaborate palaces evoking the era when the Hapsburg's ruled an empire. The dance along with music and opera is performed for a live (and presumably shivering) audience and also broadcast nationally, easily vying with New York City's crystal-ball countdown. Recreating the *Neujahrskonzert*, **Salute to Vienna** arrives with waltzes, polka, ballet, singing and lots of music provided by the Strauss Symphony of America. Like Vienna pastry it is definitely *mit schlag*, but a fun way to stretch the New Year's celebrating with a post concert glass of champagne before committing to those resolutions. After a Saturday performance in Orange County, the show goes Hollywood on Sunday. Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa; Sat., Dec. 28, 8 p.m., \$49-\$129. <https://www.scfta.org/events/2018/salute-to-vienna>. Also at the Dolby Theatre, Hollywood & Highland, 6801 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood; ; Sun., Dec. 29, 2:30 p.m., \$42-\$126. <https://www1.ticketmaster.com/event/0900570EE6404773>.



Salute to Vienna. Photo courtesy of the audiences.

1. When swans swarm

The original show opened in Britain in 1997 where it was seen by then Center Theater Group artistic director Gordon Davidson who booked it into the Music Center's Ahmanson Theatre. Thus L.A. became the American launch of **Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake*** before it went on to become a Broadway and international phenomenon. Along the way, Matthew Bourne showed how danced theater could be a game changer for both arts. Bourne kept the Tchaikovsky score but turned the classical ballet from a tale of some once upon a time kingdom into a recognizable contemporary British monarchy, replaced the female corps with male dancers in feathered knickers, and transformed the lead swan into a male who comforts and seduces the neglected prince then goes on to entice and seduce the queen herself. And now Bourne is back, the show's 20-year old audacity still ringing curiously true. As the British crown reels once more from revelations about a current prince's involvement with a notorious sexual predator, the return of the ballet continues to resonate. Ahmanson Theater, Music Center, 135 N. Grand Ave., downtown; Tues.-Fri., 8 p.m., Sat., 2:30 p.m. & 8 p.m., Sun., 1:30 p.m. & 7 p.m., thru Jan. 5, \$35-\$145. <https://www.centertheatregroup.org/>.

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