
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

There Will Be Jazz Hands

Ann Haskins · Thursday, May 21st, 2026

NYC jazz troupe joins LA dance companies in Dominguez Hills; a World Dance take on *Swan Lake* in North Hollywood; contemporary dance considers LGBTQIA+ artists in Santa Monica and El Sereno; multi-genre dance in Torrance; escapist dance in Lincoln Heights; Chinese dance and Scottish dance anchor reconsiderations of two classic Broadway musicals in Little Tokyo and Pasadena; more SoCal dance this week, and a peek at next week (May 29-June 4).

Live Dance This Week (thru May 28)

Jazzin' it

For its finale after days of classes and workshops, the **Jazz Dance Conference West** shifts focus to performance. On Sunday, its impressive faculty and guest artists take the stage for a *Professional Concert* that includes the Lifetime Achievement Award to **Pat Taylor**, beloved choreographer and artistic director of **JazzAntiqua Dance and Music Ensemble**. New Jack Cole Dancers from New York and LA Jazz Company are among the performers. On Saturday, the upcoming generation of jazz choreographers and performers are showcased in a separate concert. University Theatre, Cal State University Dominguez Hills, 1000 E. Victoria St., Dominguez Hills; Sat. & Sun., May 23-24, 7:30 pm, \$25. [Jazz Dance Conference Performances](#).



Jack Cole Dancers. Photo by Andrew D. Manning

Feathers and hips

An ambitious World Dance re-telling of *Swan Lake* with a blend of Middle Eastern, Polynesian, and fusion dance is the latest from **Bellydance Evolution**. Directed by Jillina Caralano with Shannon D'Souza as the white swan, Clara Rust as the black swan, Kapua as the prince, Noémie Küng as the sorcerer, and with original music Oaul Dinletir. El Portal Theatre, 5269 Lankershim Blvd., North Hollywood; Sat., May 23, 7:30 pm, \$30-\$52. [Bellydance Evolution: Swan Lake](#).



Bellydance Evolution's "Swan Lake." Photo courtesy of the artists

What's in a name?

Don't be put off by this concert's sponsor, **TuTu Dance**, this annual event assembles an eclectic line up of notable SoCal dance groups, this year under the title *Lipstick, Shoes & Fancy Moves 2026 ~ America: One Land Many Stories*. Announced performances include contemporary dance (Lula Washington Dance Theatre), street dance (Versa Style Street Dance Company), contemporary ballet (Sadie Black Co.), ballet/aerial (Luminario Ballet), Native American dance (Collective of Intertribal Dancers), acrobatic dance (Tyler Jacobson), wheelchair dance (Rollettes), and vintage American Dance (Hollywood Hotshots). At the James R. Armstrong Theatre, 3330 Civic Center Dr., Torrance; Fri., May 22, 8 pm, \$15. **TuTu Dance**.



Sadie Black Co. Photo courtesy of the artists

Continuing considerations

Part of the series *BEHOLD!*, this mixed bill program presents work by Miana Abramson, Keli Gunn, Avery Polster, Eva Watson, Jules Mara & Bruna Gill (Ides). The series celebrates this venue's ongoing focus, commitment and legacy as a home for LGBTQIA+ artists. At Highways Performance Space, 1651 18th St., Santa Monica; Fri., May 22, 8 pm, \$20.50, \$15.38 student/senior (includes fees). [BEHOLD!](#).

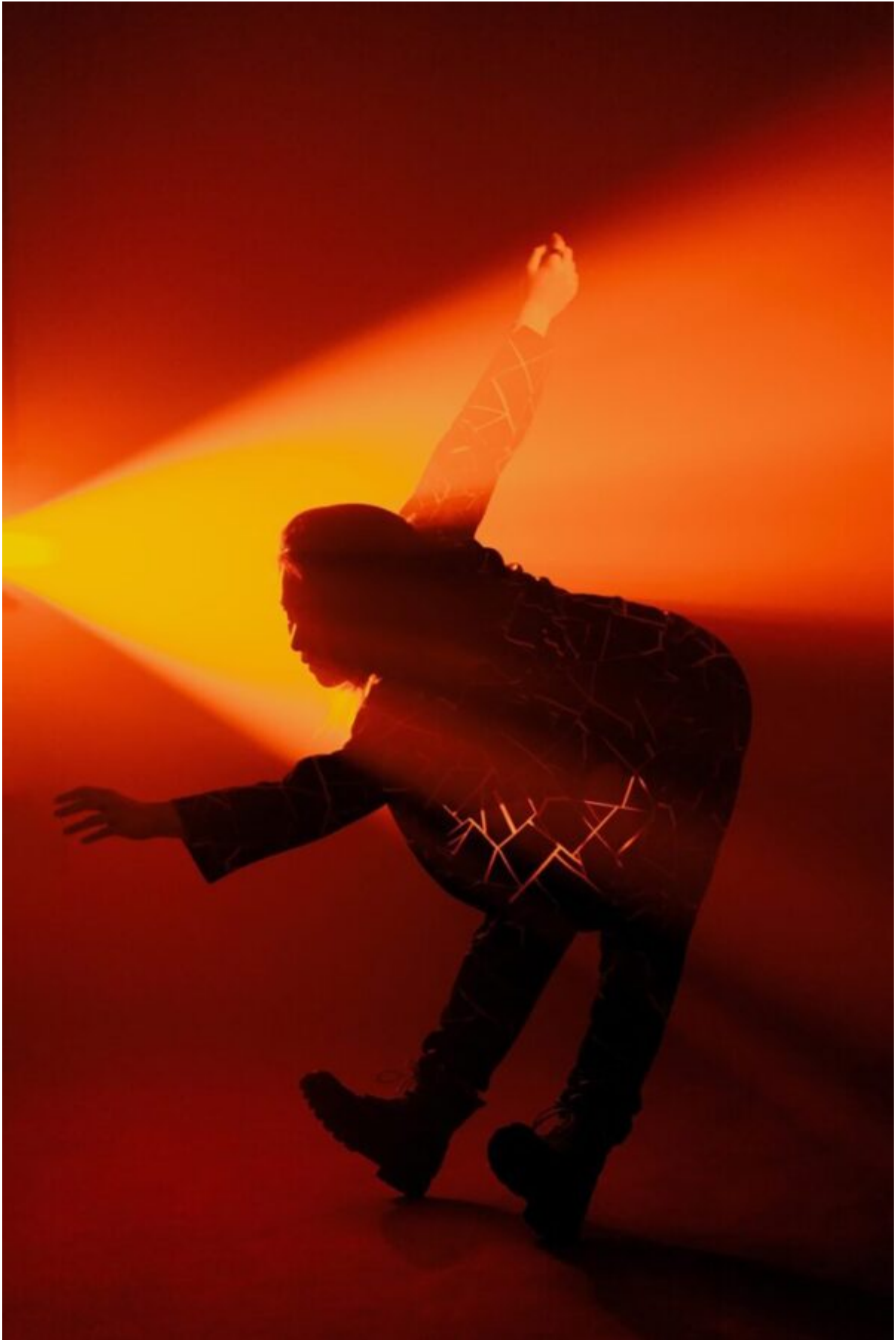


BEHOLD! includes Kelli Gunn. Photo courtesy of the artist

The real thing

Led by Azuki Umeda, **AU.THENTICITY Dance Co.** assembled a line-up of emerging choreographers for & *when the heart opens*. A distinctive performer/choreographer who layers contemporary and street dance over deep technique, Umeda is a self-described “neurodivergent Asian queer woman committed to opening performance opportunities to emerging artists.” If her curatorial eye is as on target as her own dancing, the line up of 15 dancemakers should hold some gems. Announced are Ande Godwin, Bridget Nagel, Cienna Hintz, Daniel Stankovitch, Isabella Lown, Jarod Smith, Kai Javier, Linsey Dunbar, Mia Seleno, Sadie Guthrie, Trinity Massey, Tlaktl Atl, Nat & Adria, and Nia Kester & Sarah Laskowski. Stomping Ground L.A., 5453 Alhambra

Ave., El Sereno; Fri., May 22, 6:30 pm. \$30 advance purchase. [AU.THENTICITY.](#)



Azuki Umeda. Photo by Oswaldo Cepeda

A dancer appreciation

The addition of traditional Chinese dance alongside the jazzy nightclub numbers weaves stronger non-verbal story elements into David Henry Hwang's reconsideration of Rogers and Hammerstein's *Flower Drum Song* running at Little Tokyo's Aratani Theatre to May 31. Co-presented by **East West Players** and the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center, the Aratani Theater is the larger stage this stunning show and its powerhouse dancers deserve. Hwang's libretto surrounds the beloved Rogers and Hammerstein songs with a story that refocuses the experience of Chinese immigrants in San Francisco, moves the action to the mid-1960s while striking chords that echo contemporary conundrums. Not to slight the leads or the direction, but theater reviewers' raves have given those elements most of their words, with scant nod to the dancers. Since this space is about dance, it's rightly the spot to give a shout out to the show's triple threat dancer/singers' quicksilver acting shifts among multiple characters, and especially their instantaneous shapeshifting from Communist intimidators to desperate refugees to sexy chorines. Bonus applause for the dancers' shapeshifts from sizzling jazz moves to the elegant serenity of the classical Chinese dance that requires artful manipulation of diaphanous 'water sleeves' extending several feet beyond the hands. Kudos to David Hwang and everyone who brought *Flower Drum Song* and these dancers to the JACCC Aratani Theatre, 244 S. San Pedro St., Little Tokyo; Thurs.-Fri., 7:30 pm, Sat., 2 & 8 pm, Sun., 1 & 7 pm, thru Sun., May 31, \$25-\$119. [East West Players-Flower Drum Song](#).



East West Players' "Flower Drum Song." Photo by Mike Palma

Scottish dance in mythical Scotland

Extended time in Scotland strongly influenced Alexandra Silber's new adaptation of Lerner & Loewe's *Brigadoon*. The playwright, joined by director/choreographer Katie Spelman, draw on Scottish dance to strengthen authentic Scottish presence in this musical about an American duo who stumble upon a magical Scottish village that appears only once a century. Pasadena

Playhouse, 39 S. El Molina Ave., Pasadena, Tues.-Wed. & Fri., 8 pm, Thurs., 7 pm, Sat., 2 & 8 pm, Sun., 2 pm, thru Sun., June 14, 7:30 pm, \$63-\$152. [Pasadena Playhouse-Brigadoon.](#)



Pasadena Playhouse's "Brigadoon." Photo by Jeff Lorch

Mesmerizing

From flashy appearances in the Emmy and the Grammy awards, and America's Got Talent, to years of worldwide tours, the jaw-dropping, split second choreography of artistic director Jacques Heim and his LA-based **Diavolo/Architecture in Motion** has earned popular and informed acclimation. The company is home, reprising *Escape* that finds the dancers and gymnasts in a visceral exploration of individuals trying to break free. The tv appearances may have spread the word but can't begin to capture the interplay of the movers and crescendo of powerful movement in a live Diavolo performance. This chance for the live experience of Diavolo should not be missed. At L'Espacio Diavolo, 616 Moulton Ave., Lincoln Heights; Fri.-Sat., 8 pm, Sun., 6 pm, thru Sun., June 14, \$39. [Diavolo-Veterans Project.](#)



Diavolo's "Escape." Photo by Cheryl Mann

Sign of summer

Part public performance, part participatory dance party, and free – the *al fresco* **Tuesday Night Dance** series opens with *K-Pop*. Different dance styles on Tuesdays thru Aug. 25. See website for complete list. At Segerstrom Center for the Arts, Argyros Plaza, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa; Tues., May 26, 6:30 pm. free. [Tuesday Night Dance](#).

A Peek at Next Week (May 28 to June 4)

Versa Style Street Dance Company — *21st Anniversary Street Dance Festival* at East LA Performing Arts Magnet (ELAPA), 4211 Dozier St., City Terrace; Sun., May 31, 5 pm, (Showcase-all styles), \$20. [Versa Style Street Dance Festival](#).

Mike Tyus & Co. — *Welcome to the Rebellion* at KunstHaus at Bruder Toys, 4950 W. 145th St., Hawthorne; Sat.-Sun., May 30-31, \$37.25 (includes fees). [KunstHaus](#).

BODYTRAFFIC — *Final LA Performances* at the Wallis, 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills; Thurs.-Fri., June 4-5, 7:30 pm, Sat., June 6, 2 pm, \$42.90-\$98.90. [BODYTRAFFIC](#).



BODYTRAFFIC. Photo courtesy of the artists

LA Choreographers and Dancers — *Tap Dance Widows Club* at Culver City Senior Center, 4095 Overland Ave., Culver City, Sat., May 30, 1:30 pm, free. [LA Choreographers & Dancers](#).

American Contemporary Ballet — *Spectacular Balanchine* at American Contemporary Ballet, 333 S. Hope St., CO 150, Downtown LA; Thurs.-Sat., 8 pm. June 4 to 20, \$65-\$105. [American Contemporary Ballet](#).

LA Dance Project — *City of Dance* at Century Park (lawn between towers), 2000 Avenue of the Stars, Century City; Tues.-Thurs., June 2-4, 12:30 pm, free. Also at Marciano Art Foundation, 4357 Wilshire Blvd., Hancock Park; Thurs., June 4, 6:30 pm, free. Also at Hollyhock House, Barnsdall Art Park, 4800 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood; Sat., June 6, 4 pm, free. Also at Tongva Park, 1615 Ocean Ave., Santa Monica; Sun., June 7, 4 pm, free. Also at Hollywood Forever, 6000 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood; Wed., June 17, 7 pm, free. Also at Gloria Molina Park at the Music Center, Block 4 (near City Hall), 200 N. Grand Ave., DowntownLA; Thurs., June 18, noon, free. Also at LA County Museum of Art, Plaza near Geffen Galleries, 5905 Wilshire Blvd., Mid-City; Sun., June 21, 3 pm, free. [LA Dance Project-City of Dance](#).

Shag with a Twist at The Grand Annex Music Hall, 434 W. 6th St., San Pedro; Sat., May 30 (may be sold out), June 6 (may be sold out), Aug. 29, Sept. 26, & Oct. 3. \$55.20-\$65.87. [Shag with a Twist](#).

The American Ballet Theatre William J Gillespie School — *End of Year Showcase* at Musco Center for the Arts, Chapman University, 415 N. Glassell, Orange; Sat., May 30, 2 & 6 pm, \$25-\$103. [End of Year Showcase](#).

The Wooden Floor — *43rd Annual Concert: Grounded Orbits* at the Irvine Barclay Theatre, UC Irvine, 4242 Campus Dr., Irvine; Thurs.-Fri., May 28-29, 8 pm, Sat., May 30, 2:30 & 8 pm, \$13-\$54. [The Wooden Floor](#).

Laguna Dance Festival — *Gala* at Surf & Sand Resort, 1555 S. Coast Hwy., Laguna Beach; Sun., May 31, 5 pm, \$350. [Laguna Dance Festival](#).

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