

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Zealous New Zealand Debut

Ann Haskins · Thursday, February 15th, 2024

Contemporaries tag team in the Arts District, New Zealand visitors launch a dance fest in Laguna Beach, committed lovers keep dying downtown, a bit of Balanchine in Irvine, more SoCal dance this week, and a peek at next week.

Live This Week

A launch with grace

The mainstage performances of this year's **Laguna Dance Festival** brings a first look at New Zealand's **Black Grace**, directed by Neil Ieremia. The company offers a free (with reservation) Thursday preview of its merging of Pacific Islander dance with contemporary movement and on Friday is showcased in a ticketed performance. The New Zealand troupe returns Saturday to share the evening with **Los Angeles Ballet**. LAB, in turn, shares the stage on Sunday with the tap troupe **Sophisticated Ladies**. Details at the website. Laguna Playhouse, 606 Laguna Canyon Rd., Laguna Beach; Thurs, Feb., 22, 6 pm, free w/reservation, Fri.-Sat., Feb. 22-24, 7:30 pm, Sun., Feb. 25, 2 pm, \$60, \$30 students [Laguna Dance Festival](#).



Black Grace. Photo courtesy of the artists

Lots of new to see

Four works, including the highly anticipated LA premiere of *The Barest Echo* from Flock Works (aka Alice Klock and Florian Lorchner) join contemporary choreography from Peter Chu, Amanda Kay White, and founder/director Jennifer Backhaus. The ensemble is a major presence in OC and its stature is deserved. This is a welcome, if rare local sighting. Hopefully, the first of many more. LA Dance Project, 2245 E. Washington Blvd., Arts District; Sat., Feb. 17, 8 pm, \$30, \$20 students. [Backhausdance](#).



Backhausdance. Photo by Shawna Sarnowski

Three to provoke

Inspired by the events of January 6 and the reality of late stage democracy in America, the contemporary company **Laurie Sefton Creates** premieres *Herd. Person?* As a choreographer, Laurie Sefton is a thoughtful provocateur and this time considers how a person can retain or be robbed of the capacity for independent thought and action when absorbed into a larger group or tribe. The new work is joined by two other Sefton works: *Triptych: Experience in Defiance*, her 2018 collaboration with LA-based hip hop and spoken word artist Jason Chu and an excerpt from *Girl, Get Off*, her 2017 plea for sexual tolerance. LA Dance Project, 2245 E. Washington Blvd., Arts District; Thurs.-Sat., Feb. 22-24, 8 pm, \$30. [Laurie Sefton Creates](#).



Laurie Sefton Creates. Photo by Denise Leitner

Romeo & Juliet committed

The British choreographer who transformed *Swan Lake* into a tale of ballet men in feathered knickers arrives with the 2019 **Matthew Bourne's Romeo & Juliet**. Shakespeare's star-crossed central lovers remain, as does Prokofiev's seductively dissonant score, but the action has been moved from Verona, Italy to a dystopian asylum and Juliet's vile cousin Tybalt is now a sexually abusive warden. Bourne does darker with the best, yet still sets a standard for drawing out the poignant moments and bits of light in his shadowy retellings. The balcony pas de deux with one prolonged kiss is the master choreographer in element and kudos to the dancers for holding it together, literally. Music Center, Ahmanson Theatre, 135 N. Grand Ave., downtown; Tues.-Fri., 8 pm, Sat., 2 & 8 pm, Sun., 1 & 6:30 pm, thru Sun., Feb. 25, \$35-\$155. [CTG](#).



Matthew Bourne's *Romeo & Juliet*. Photo by Johan Persson

A vision in view

Faculty choreography in an array of genres and a staging of George Balanchine's *Serenade* highlight **UCI Dance Visions**, the annual performance by the university's dance department. Irvine Barclay Theatre, UC Irvine, 4242 Campus Dr., Irvine; Thurs.-Fri., Feb. 22-23, 8 pm, Sat., Feb. 24, 2 & 8 pm, \$30, \$26 seniors, \$10 students & children. [Irvine Barclay Theatre](#).



UCI Dance. Photo courtesy of the artists

What's with the bat?

Having cooperated with Pacific Opera Project on nearly a dozen operas, choreographer **Amy Lawrence**'s newest project is POP's production of *Die Fledermaus* (The Bat). Occidental College, Thorne Hall, 1600 Campus Rd., Eagle Rock; Sat., Feb. 17, 7 pm, Sun., Feb. 18, 3 pm, \$15-\$150. [Die Fledermaus | Feb 2024 | Pacific Opera Project](#).

A Peek at Next Week

BODYTRAFFIC — *In Pursuit of Love* at Wilshire Boulevard Temple, Audrey Irmas Pavilion, 3663 Wilshire Blvd, Mid-City; Thurs., Feb. 29, 7:30 pm, \$50. [BODYTRAFFIC](#).

BrockusRED — *Blue* at Veterans Memorial Complex, Garden Room, 4117 Overland Ave., Culver City; Fri.-Sat., Feb. 23-24, 7:30 pm, \$15. Reservations at Esmeralda.danceinla@gmail.com.



BrockusRED. Photo by Denise Leitner

waheedworks — *Bodies as Site of Faith and Protest* at USC, Bovard Auditorium, 3551 Trousdale Pkwy, University Park; Wed., Feb. 28, 7:30 pm, free w/reservation at [Visions and Voices USC](#).

Tashara Gavin-Moorehead with Keisha Clark-Booth, Alli Gray Odeniyide ; Malani Janel — *The Fabric of Our Country* at Highways Performance Space, 1651 18th St., Santa Monica; Fri.-Sat., Feb. 23-24, 8:30 pm, \$25, \$20 seniors/students. [Highways Performance Space](#).

MOMIX — *Alice* at Chapman College, Musco Center for the Arts, 415 N. Glassell, Orange; Fri., Feb. 23, 7:30 pm, \$32.75 -\$73. [Musco Center for the Arts](#). Also at Pepperdine University, Smothers Theater, 24255 Pacific Coast Hwy, Malibu; Wed., Feb. 28, 8 pm, \$32.50-\$65. [Pepperdine](#).



Momix. Photo by opuscactus

LA Samba Dancers *23rd Annual LA Brazilian Carnival — Carna-Folia* at Teragram Ballroom, 1234 W. 7th St., downtown; Sun., Feb. 25, 4 pm, \$25. [Brazilian Nites](#).

Benita Bike's DanceArt at LA Mission College, AMP Theatre, 13356 Eldridge Ave., Sylmar; Thurs., Feb. 29, 7 pm, free. [DanceArt](#).

Versa Style Dance –*House Dance Battle 1 v 1* at Mihran K Studios, 135 N. Victory Blvd., Burbank; Fri., Feb. 23, 8 pm, \$15, [Versa Style Dance](#).



Versa-Style Dance Company. Photo courtesy of the artists

Jazz Spectrum Dance Company — *Continuing the Legacy* at Spectrum Dance Center, Studio Theatre, 22661 Lambert St., Suite 204-205, Lake Forest; Sun., Feb. 25, 5 pm, \$42. [Jazz Spectrum Dance Company](#).

African American Dance at the Aquarium of the Pacific, 100 Aquarium Way, Long Beach; Sat.-Sun., Feb., 24-25, 9 am to 5 pm, \$45, \$42 seniors, \$30 youth. [Aquarium of the Pacific](#).

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