
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Moseying Around the Decameron

Ann Haskins · Wednesday, May 5th, 2021

Dancing on Santa Monica's darker side, lessons from a prior plague, four days of street dance, something for Mom, and live dance resurfaces along with streamed performances, plus recent online encores, where to take online dance classes, and more SoCal dance this week.

This Week

Just don't call her a yentl

Matchmaking scientists with choreographers is a hallmark of choreographer Donna Sternberg's recurring series Awe and Wonder. In his new edition, **Donna Sternberg & Dancers** turns the focus on climate change. The choreographers' varied styles include tap (Gisele Silva), street dance (Leigh Foaad), classical Indian Bharata Natyam (Ramya Harishankar), and contemporary (Sternberg), paired with the science fields of rocketry (Anita Sengupta), climatology (Christine O'Connell), nursing (Sharon Cobb), and immunology (Devavani Chatterjea). The online performances include conversations with the dancemakers and scientists about what they learned about each other in the creative process. Fri., May 7, 7 p.m. & Sat., May 8, 5 p.m., \$10 at [Donna Sternberg & Dancers](#).



Donna Sternberg & Dancers. Photo courtesy of the artists.

She does like a good book

Choreographer **Rosanna Gamson** has drawn some of her most compelling work from literature ranging from *Scheherazade* in *Tales of the Arabian Nights* to the Brothers Grimm's *Hansel and Gretel*, and lectures by theoretical physicist Richard Feynman. Other than Albert Camus' *The Plague*, what could be more appropriate pandemic source material than Boccaccio's *Decameron* with tales from ten strangers sheltering from the bubonic plague? Just as the tales of the ten travelers unfold one at a time, Gamson's *The Decameron Project* rolls out ten films, each made by a different artist. The episodes for the first five weeks are from **Jinglin Liao**, **Kevin Zambrano**, **Dion Pratt**, **Gretchen Ackerman**, and **Clementine Gamson-Levyare**, viewable for free on [Instagram](#).



Rosanna Gamson/WorldWide. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Dances with cars

Over three Saturdays, **Suárez Dance Theater** rolled out three short films under the banner *Mapping Our Stories*. Inspired by the histories of Black, Native and LatinX people, each film is set in a Santa Monica public space with often overlooked cultural significance (the city provided funding). Choreographer/performer **Bernard Brown** of bbmoves takes the audience from the landmark Phillips Chapel CME Church (the 1909 church was the first serving the African American Community) to the site of “Inkwell Beach” where Blacks and Browns were restricted in segregated California beaches. Acknowledging her Chumash and Tongva Nations heritage, poet/songwriter **Jessa Calderon**’s film starts overlooking the ocean from Tongva Park. The history of the Westside Classics Car Club in Santa Monica is the focus of the film from **Primera Generación Dance Collective (PGDC)** and its members Alfonso Cervera, Rosa Rodriguez-Frazier, Irvin Manuel Gonzalez, and Patricia “Patty” Huerta. Each film will have resources for further exploration. All three screen on Fri., May 7, 6 p.m. along with a filmmakers discussion. Free with registration at [Eventbrite](#).



Suárez Dance Theater. Photo courtesy of t Primera Generación Dance Collective (PGDC).

Hybrid performance No. 1

The first post-pandemic opening of a major venue brings the kind of hybrid socially distanced live concert in combination with a streamed performance that hopefully will be retained as part of dance’s future. Over the past year, many dance companies created safe bubbles for small groups of dancers to work with choreographers, mostly for live-streamed performances although occasionally in the outdoors for limited audiences. **American Ballet Theatre** made safe bubbles

for 18 dancers who worked with a trio of New York-based choreographers—Jessica Lang, Lauren Lovette, and Darrell Grand Moultrie. Segerstrom Center for the Arts hosted the single performance before a limited live audience and a streamed version is available this week. Along with the three new, contemporary works, more traditional ballet gets a nod with the technical showpiece *Grande Pas Classique* and the Act II pas de deux from *Swan Lake*. Streaming Wed., May 12 thru Wed., May 26, \$25 per household. [Segerstrom Center](#).



American Ballet Theater. Photo by Todd Rosenberg Photography.

Hybrid performance No. 2

When the pandemic shut down live performances last year, organizers of the **OC Dance Festival** regrouped and presented the festival as a streamed event. This year's festival is another reflection of the type of hybrid event being announced as live performance cautiously returns with limited in person seating augmented by online performances. The online dance films can be purchased thru Fri., May 7 with a choice of two shows. Show No. 1 has PGK Dance, Regina Klenjoski Dance Company, Kairos Dance Company, Western High School Commercial Dance, Continuum, and Antics. Show No. 2 includes APA Dance Company, Luciana Martinez, Contempo Ballet, Cheng-Chieh You, Marimar Lopez Tovar, Tashara Gavin-Moorehead, and Victoria Himes. Some of the online companies are also part of two live performances on Sat., May 8. The 5 p.m. show has Goblin Party, Benita Bike's DanceArt, DagDag Dance, Trevyn and Dancers, and host company Akomi Dance. The 7 p.m. concert includes Louise Reichlin/LA Choreographers & Dancers, Continuum, Evolution Dance Company, and Jazz Spectrum Dance Company. Online performances available thru Fri., May 6. Live performances at Rose Center Theater, 14140 All American Way, Westminster; Sat., May 8, 5 & 8 p.m., \$25 single tickets for online or live, two shows \$45, three for \$70, all four for \$90, VIP tickets with bonuses \$125. Info at [Akomi Dance](#), Tickets at [Rose Center Theater](#).



OC Dance Festival's Akomi Dance. Photo by Vytas Barauskas.

Taking it to the streets

The exhilarating energy and commitment of **Versa Style Dance** in live performance continued to be evident over the past year with dance videos, online lifeskills coaching, a virtual Hip Hop Dance Festival, and this week the street dance troupe hosts a four-day *Community Expressions Showcase* marking its 16th anniversary. Each day includes multiple pre-recorded performances, DJs, community collaborators, a Zoomed family dance class on Friday, and a company premiere on Saturday. Details and reservations at the website. Wed.-Fri., May 12-13, 7:30, Sat., May 15, 3 p.m. [Versa Style Dance](#).



Versa-Style Dance. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Crediting the composer

A streamed performance premiering a trio of contemporary ballets from **Kenneth J Walker Dance Project** concludes its two week run. All three works boast music by frequent collaborator DJ Quetzal Star and choreography by Walker. The trio of works—*Focus on the Middle Distance*, *Echo of a Remembered Place* and *Soft Ambient Pulse*—are viewable online thru Fri., May 7, \$16. [Ballet Project TV](#).



Kenneth J Walker Dance Project. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Oz without Toto

In addition to participating in the OC Dance Festival, choreographer Louise Reichlin and her dancers also are streaming the family-friendly *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*. Reichlin's popular take on a Frank Baum *Oz* book that did not involve Dorothy and Toto is free online thru Wed., May 12 on [Vimeo](#).



“The Patchwork Girl of Oz.” Photo courtesy of the artists.

Adding to the trove

The 2005 Ford Theater performance of *Yabas/Queens* is the latest addition to **Viver Brasil**'s weekly online rebroadcast of a past performance. The company's rich repertoire reflects the company's efforts to preserve Brasil's African culture in dance and music. Free at [Viver Brasil](#). The troupe also is part of KCET's *Southland Sessions* streaming at [KCET](#).



Viver Brasil. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Bring your own brunch

The annual **MOMentumPlace** organized by Lexi Pearl established itself as an alternative to the neighborhood brunch lines on Mother's Day and an excuse to enjoy an afternoon of dance, aerial, and circus acts in the pastoral setting of Topanga Canyon. The performers shifted online last year and zoom back this year with another streamed event. Sun., May 9, 2 p.m. PDT, \$35 per household. Info and Zoom reservations at [Theatricum Botanicum](#).



MOMentum Place. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Recent Online Encores

Oh, the places we have been

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*. Just as vaccination and pandemic restrictions start to allow travel, the 15-week dance film world tour that began in January concluded earlier this week with Emma Rosenzweig-Bock in a film co-directed by Jonas and Ireland-based Kevin McGloughlin. It joins the other 14 short films still viewable at [Films.Dance](#).



Films.Dance. Photo courtesy of the artists.

Is it contagious?

For **Luminario Ballet**'s new short dance film *L'Invalide*, artistic director Judith Flex Helle undertakes choreographer and director duties. Dancers Shannon Beach, Sadie Black, Jasmine Perry, Alexander Stabler, and Miguel Reyes Santiago create what sounds like a fever dream ballet. Online Mon., May 3, free at [Luminario Ballet](#).



Luminario Ballet. Photo courtesy of the artists.

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 at [LA Dance Chronicle](#).

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