

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Collaborated Confusion

Ann Haskins · Thursday, May 11th, 2023

Avatars from Switzerland downtown, beyond Bollywood in Beverly Hills, tragic lovers die again in Costa Mesa, post-museum dance in Pasadena, AAPI dance in El Sereno, bayside ballet goes hillside in Glendale, a post-modern legend reprised in Little Tokyo, more SoCal dance this busy week (May 12 to 18), and a peek at next week.

### *Live This Week*

#### **Bollywood blue**

Blending hip-hop, modern, and South Asian dance with a soupçon of Bollywood, Achinta S. McDaniel brings her **Blue13 Dance Company** to the stage. This time, Bollywood inspired five of the dances on the program that includes a preview of a new work in progress that she promises will continue the company's pledge to dance "at the intersection of diaspora and disruption." Wallis Annenberg Center for the Arts, 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills; Fri.-Sat., May 12-13, 7:30 pm, \$29-\$79. [The Wallis](#).



Blue13 Dance Company. Photo courtesy of the artists

#### **A sweetly sad suite**

After its sold-out premiere last year in France, **LA Dance Project** presents the U.S. premiere of Benjamin Millepied's *Romeo and Juliet Suite* for three performances this weekend. This is a streamlined version of Millepied and LA Dance Project's first edition of *Romeo and Juliet* at Disney Hall in 2018 and the second version in summer 2019 at the Hollywood Bowl. Some may quibble as to whether this is a brand new work or a third edition, but reviews from the Paris performances are strong evidence that the work retains the core of those initial efforts, including the triple threat casting, while going in adventurous directions with more extensive dancing, an abbreviated version of the Prokofiev score, and expanded, innovative the use of live-streamed video. Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa; Fri., May 12, 7:30 pm, Sat., May 13, 2 & 7:30 pm, \$39-\$99. [SCFTA](#).



LA Dance Project. Photo courtesy of La Seine Musicale

## From the bay to the foothills

Mostly seen in the South Bay, this time **Kenneth Walker Dance Project (KWDP)**'s contemporary dance company performs in this historic venue set in the San Gabriel Foothills. The company repertoire runs from neo-classical to post-modern. Walker and his dancers promise to bring that spectrum to this enduring series curated by Jamie Nichols. Brand Library & Art Center, 1601W. Mountain St., Glendale; Sat., May 13, 5 pm, free. [Brand Library](#).



Kenneth Walker Dance Project. Photo courtesy of the artists

## A baker's dozen

Overseen by Derrick Paris, this edition of **Voices** showcases dance and performance by 13 Asian-American Pacific Islander (AAPI) artists. Announced performers include Chelsea Roquero, Stephanie Dai, Azuki Umeda, Ryan Ruiz, Teresa Declines, Miko Hornilla, and Jamin Anne Kim. Stomping Ground LA, 5453 Alhambra Ave., El Sereno; Sat., May 13, 7:30 pm, \$15. [Eventbrite](#).





Azuki Umeda. Photo courtesy of the artist

## Through the door

Under the banner **THRESHHOLDS**, this program from **Nancy Evans Dance Theatre** reprises *IMPRINT*, originally performed at the Norton Simon Museum. The line-up also includes three new works considering war's indiscriminate destruction, pondering the deep effects involved in confronting change, and taking inspiration from a 1919 satire written by Rose Macaulay. At ARC Pasadena, 1158 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena; Sat., May 13 & 20, 8 pm, Sun., May 14 & 21, 4 pm, \$20. [Nancy Evans Dance Theatre](#).



Nancy Evans Dance Theatre. Photo courtesy of the artists

## A wide array

Expect a diverse array of dances styles when **LA Unbound** takes the stage. This spring edition promises 20 performances spanning the dance spectrum. AGBU Performing Arts Center, 2495 E Mountain St., Pasadena; Sat., May 13, 1:30 pm, \$22-\$32 [AGBU](#).



MOMentum Place. Photo courtesy of the artist



## Perfect for the right kind of Mom

For an entertaining, halcyon alternative to crowded restaurants on Mother's Day, consider **MOMentum Place**. Taking over a stage that hosts summer Shakespeare under the oak trees, this mostly annual event offers an array of dancers, acrobats, aerialists, and other entertainers curated by Lexi Pearl. Bring a picnic or opt for the spring-themed brunch (additional charge). Theatricum Botanicum, 1419 N. Topanga Canyon Rd., Topanga Canyon; Sun., May 14, brunch at noon (\$30), show at 2pm, \$35 advance, \$40 at door, \$15 students, \$10 12 year & under. [Theatricum Botanicum](#).



Cosmogony. Photo courtesy of the artists

## Capture that motion!

Taking the *Avatar* concept of motion-capture into the realm of dance, three Swiss dancers are digitally altered in **Cosmogony** with their performance then streamed to giant LED screens here in LA. The dancers are Susana Panades Diaz, Rudi Van der Merwe, and Jozsef Trefeli. The title refers to the study of the origin of the universe. A video preview is at [. The event is at the Music Center, Jerry Moss Plaza, 135 N. Grand Ave., downtown; Fri., May 12, Sat., June 3, 10 & 17, 7 pm, free w/reservation at \[Music Center\]\(#\).](#)



Rudy Perez. Photo courtesy of the artist

## Talk about lineage

Choreographer Rudy Perez made his mark as part of the post modern dance energy center on New York's Judson Church, then headed west where he continued to choreograph for his Rudy Perez Performance Ensemble. Tamsin Carlson, who danced with Merce Cunningham as well as Perez' company, is currently chair of modern dance at the Colburn School's Trudi Zipper Dance Institute. In that last role, she has reconstructed Perez' *Cheap Imitation* for the Dance Institute's students. The free performance offers a rare opportunity to see a work by Perez. Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, 152 N. Central Ave., Little Tokyo; Thurs., May 11, 6:15 & 7:15 pm, free with reservation at [MOCA](#).

## Go for a spin

Vinyl records and their aficionados are the main event at the day-long *On the Record: Vinyl Fair*, but the day includes two performances by **UniverSoul Hip Hop**. The Music Center, Jerry Moss Plaza, 135 N. Grand Ave., downtown; Sat., May 13, 11:30 am & 1:15 pm. [Music Center](#).

## A Peek at Next Week

**Bernard Brown/bbmoves** at Brand Library & Art Center, 1601W. Mountain St., Glendale; Sat., May 20, 5 pm, free. [Brand Library](#).

**Ate 9** at Live Arts Los Angeles, 4210 Panamint St., Glassell Park; Sat., May 20, Tues.-Wed., May 23-24, Fri.-Sat., May 26-27, 9 pm, \$30, [Flipcause](#).

**MOMIX-Alice** at the Music Center, Ahmanson Theater, 135 N. Grand Ave., Venice; Fri.-Sat.,

May 19-20, 7:30 pm, Sun., May 21, 2 pm, \$20-\$87. [Music Center](#).



Momix' "Alice." Photo courtesy of the artists

**Benita Bike's DanceArt** at Stomping Ground LA, 5453 Alhambra Ave., El Sereno, Sat., May 20, 8 pm, Sun., May 21, 7:30 pm, \$25, \$20 seniors, \$15 students. [Benita Bike's DanceArt](#).

**Martha Graham Dance Company** and Long Beach Opera in *The Feast* at Noguchi Garden and Samueli Theatre, Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa; Sat.-Sun., May 20-21, 7:30 pm, \$89-\$165. [Log Beach Opera](#).

**Heidi Duckler Dance** *Time for a Slow Dance* at Martin Luther King Jr. Community Hospital Campus on Sat., May 20, 4:30- 6 pm, free. [Heidi Duckler Dance](#).

**Re:born Dance Interactive** in *Home* at Sugar Bank, 4414 W. 2<sup>nd</sup> St., Hancock Park; Sat., May 20, 4 & 7 pm, Sun., May 21, noon & 3 pm, \$ [Re:born Dance Interactive](#).

**LA Phil's** *The Beast* with choreography by Chris Emile Walt Disney Hall, 111 S. Grand Ave., downtown; Sat., May 20, 4 pm, \$20-\$64. [LA Phil](#).



**Pony Box Dance Theatre** gala. Private residence in Long Beach; address provided with ticket purchase; Sat., May 20, 6 pm, \$80-\$100. [Pony Box Dance Theatre](#).

**Palm Springs Dance Project** *Communities' Finest Dance Showcast* at Palm Springs Cultural Center, 2300 Baristo Rd., Palm Springs; Sat. May 20, 5 pm, \$15, \$8 students, free children under six years. [Palm Springs Dance Project](#).

### *Dance Notes*

*In memorium* — **Deborah Lawlor**, longtime supporter of SoCal flamenco died earlier this month at the age of 83. Co-artistic director of the Fountain Theater, Lawlor was responsible for the Fountain's extensive dance program, including the company's renowned *Forever Flamenco* series.

**Deadlines:** **May 24** for applications for the 2023 Choreographers Showcase October 7 and 8 in Carmel. Founded by artistic director Fran Spector in 1997, the festival showcases work by local, national and international dancemakers in an historic outdoor theater. Information and application at [Spector Dance](#).

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## Values and Science In “A White Heron”

Ilana Goldowitz · Tuesday, May 9th, 2023

### Values and Science In “A White Heron”

by Ilana Goldowitz, PhD

What happens to our ability to discover nature when the science world shuts out people with certain values?

In the 19th century, a collecting craze raged in the US and Europe. Biologists arranged expeditions to distant islands, hunters and amateur collectors stuffed birds and preserved ferns, and fashionable ladies wore exotic feathers and decorated their homes with framed specimens. Scientists wrote dense monographs comparing the forms and detailed structures of animals and plants, down to the number of hairs on a fly's leg.

In her 1886 short story “A White Heron,” author Sarah Orne Jewett depicts the contrast in values and understanding of nature between the people of rural Maine and the “men of science” from the cities who relied on local knowledge to find specimens for their collections.

The story depicts a young man with a gun who comes to a community near the Maine coast in search of a particular “queer tall white bird”. “Do you cage ‘em up?” a local resident asks dubiously. “Oh, no, they’re stuffed and preserved, dozens and dozens of them,” the visitor answers.

The ornithologist meets a young girl called Sylvia, who is fascinated with the natural world and spends most of her time “straying out of doors.” Though Sylvia has little formal education, it’s clear that she possesses intimate knowledge of wild creatures and their lives in the woods around her.

Sylvia knows she’s seen the bird the ornithologist is looking for. In exchange for showing him where this “white heron” lives, the ornithologist makes Sylvia a tantalizing offer — not only much-needed money, but a glimpse into a world of exploration and scientific learning on a larger scale.

Admiring the young man’s lifestyle and knowledge, Sylvia goes out in secret early the next morning. She climbs a tall pine tree, and as she knew she could, she finds the white heron and watches as the “wild, light, slender bird” visits its mate sitting on a nest high in a hemlock tree.



A “white heron” or snowy egret in breeding plumage. Photo by [Len Blumin](#) from Mill Valley, California, United States, CC BY 2.0

Sylvia has a choice to make: gain the ornithologist’s approval, or stick with her intuitive valuing of animals’ lives over curiosity. Though tempted, Sylvia chooses to keep the location of the nest to herself, and the ornithologist goes away empty-handed, taking his scientific connections with him.

Reading “A White Heron” after six years in graduate school, it struck me that even today, Sylvia would never make it in a science career. Her values are a mismatch for how biology education and the research industry operate. But this is to the detriment of biology, because the story makes clear that the ethics that makes Sylvia an outsider to the scientific world are the same ethics that help her understand animals’ lives in the wild. For Sylvia, there seems to be a tradeoff between two incompatible ways of learning about nature, hers and that of the man who “killed the very birds he seemed to like so much.”



## In the lab, 1880s and today

In a multitude of ways, from the publish-or-perish academic culture to the need for self-promotion, humble and observant personalities like Sylvia's are filtered out of science. Today, whether intentionally or not, the research industry quickly enforces a "scientific" view of biology as something that happens in laboratory dishes, tubes, slides, and computerized genome sequences.

People who begin their science education with mismatched worldviews are shaped by how they're taught to do science and what they're told is "scientific." Curt Yehnert, a white teacher working in reservation schools, tells the story of a student who had resisted dissecting a frog in biology class because to do so would violate her Navajo traditions.<sup>1</sup> The teacher recalls his pride after (in Yehnert's eyes) the student finally gained the "courage" to change her "concept of who she was" and dissected the frog. In a 2018 survey, college students from a variety of Native American groups reported conflicts between science lab requirements and requirements of their cultures — such as dissection taboos, beliefs that animal bodies should be returned to the earth, and prohibitions on killing or touching certain animals — and many of the respondents said they would opt out of science classes to avoid these conflicts.<sup>2</sup>

There's a similar price of admission for some medical students. Dissecting a human cadaver is required in almost all US medical schools, which poses a problem for Jewish Kohanim (members of the Jewish priestly clan). Kohanim who are traditionally religious don't touch or come near dead human bodies, and they are currently unable to study medicine in the US because of the cadaver dissection requirement. Other Jewish students face choices in classes or research labs. While Jewish traditions do not totally forbid research on animals, Judaism does limit this research based on necessity, avoiding cruelty to animals, and avoiding waste.

Some students may be willing to participate if everything is done respectfully, but this doesn't always happen. Some of the cadavers that medical students dissect are sourced from donors, but according to an article in Johns Hopkins Magazine, others are unclaimed bodies or the bodies of people whose families didn't have the financial resources to arrange a funeral.<sup>3</sup> In biology classrooms, if students and teachers joke around during animal experiments and dissections, the lesson some students take away is that the only true scientific attitude is a cavalier, uncaring one.

Dr. Lori Alviso Alvord, Navajo surgeon and author, argues in an article that students should be allowed to "be fully themselves" and maintain their "moral integrity" even in medical school, and that granting exemptions to the dissection requirement for Navajo students and other "conscientious objectors" can facilitate the diverse body of physicians we need to treat our diverse population.<sup>4</sup> A similar argument could be made regarding students who wish to enter medical or biological research.

## Could biology with different ethics lead to different insights?

Limited by their techniques, most 19<sup>th</sup>-century collector-biologists focused on dead creatures and on static form and structure. If you're just beginning to learn about the living things of a new place, form is the most obvious place to start.

Similarly, once European dissection taboos fell out of favor, Western scientific medicine developed an anatomy-first understanding of the human body, dividing up the body by organs and

studying the characteristics and the diseases of each organ. This is still reflected in the names of many of our medical specialties (gastroenterology, nephrology, pulmonology, etc).



Preserved birds in the ornithology collection at the Museum of Natural Science, Louisiana State University. Photo by [Frank Schulenburg](#).

But form is not the only important aspect of biology. Biologists study creatures that adapt, respond to their environments, form complex interactions with other living things, and use their plasticity to shape themselves over time. Studying live organisms in the lab reveals other things, and studying them in the places where they actually live reveals still more.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, some strains of biology have focused on ever-smaller forms and structures, but opposing strains, such as systems biology, have developed a more dynamic view of biology as the science of living things and living systems that cannot be reduced to their parts. The focus on the static forms of proteins (as observed through X-ray crystallography) is giving way to an understanding that many proteins are in constant motion, and this unstructured motion is essential to their functions. A focus on structure made plants seem simple and microbes even simpler, but today, we're discovering the complexity of microbial communities and of communication between microbes within our own bodies and elsewhere.

Meanwhile, medicine needs to respond to real humans living diverse, complex lives in a complex social world. In medicine, some of the cultures that forbade human dissection developed views of patients “not simply as a body, but as a whole being,” as Dr. Lori Alvord puts it.

Today, though, many students come into biology labs having had little contact with the natural world. And some biology programs don't offer them much more. If only students from a narrow range of backgrounds succeed in science, they may be less likely to recognize the specific artificialities that laboratory studies can introduce. In the medical sciences, researchers from a narrow range of social and financial backgrounds may not recognize the pitfalls that can happen when drugs tested only in the narrow conditions of a controlled clinical trial are released for use in the complicated real world.

Ethics and experiences are linked to worldview, and worldview is linked to what you can imagine and discover. Our personalities and values shape our research questions, our hypotheses, where we choose to look for evidence, and how we interpret data. Even today, being someone with constraints – including ethical constraints – that change how you do science might actually let you observe something no one else can.



## Postscript

The “white heron” the ornithologist sought in Jewett’s story was most likely a snowy egret (*Egretta thula*). Like many other species during the collecting craze of the 1800s, the snowy egret was hunted nearly to extinction by collectors and because its plumes were popular in hat-making. Populations rebounded after a 1918 migratory bird treaty made hunting snowy egrets illegal, and the species is doing well today. In today’s world, researchers who don’t give up their personal values at the laboratory door will probably be the ones to figure out how we can discover more while doing less harm.

\*

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## Humberto Ak’abal: Three Poems, Translated by Michael Bazzett

Humberto Ak’abal · Monday, May 8th, 2023

### EL TIEMPO

El tiempo es silencio  
que aman los pájaros.

Lo salpican con su canto,  
lo hilvanan  
con las herbas de su voz.

El tiempo:  
ni va  
ni viene  
ni se detiene...

Los pájaros  
simplemente  
cantan.

## TIME

Time is a silence  
that birds love.

They season it with singing,  
baste it  
in the herbs of their voice.

Time  
neither comes  
nor goes  
nor stays...

And the birds  
simply  
sing.

\*

## EN EL MANANTIAL

En el agua quieta,  
una libélula de alas coloradas  
navegaba sobre una hoja seca.

## AT THE SPRING

In still water,  
a rose-winged dragonfly  
sails on a dry leaf.

\*

## SUEÑERO

—Es usted el Señor Sueñero?  
—Sí, Señora, soy yo.  
—No entiendo cómo usted,  
siendo tan inteligente,  
pierde el tiempo haciendo poesía.  
Ya ve, cuánta se ha escrito



y el mundo sigue peor...  
 —Y usted cree  
 que si no se escribiera poesía  
 el mundo estaría mejor...?

## DREAMER

—Are you Mr. Dreamer?  
 —Yes, ma'am, that's me.  
 —I don't understand how you,  
 being so intelligent,  
 waste your time making poetry.  
 You see how much has been written  
 yet the world grows worse...  
 —And you believe  
 if poetry were not written  
 the world would be better...?

\*

*All poems translated by Michael Bazzett*



Michael Bazzett is the author of four books of poetry, most recently *The Echo Chamber* (Milkweed, 2021). His work has appeared in *GRANTA*, *The Threepenny Review*, *The Sun*, *The Nation*, and *The Paris Review*, and his verse translation of the Mayan creation epic, *The Popol Vuh*, (Milkweed, 2018) was longlisted for the National Translation Award. His translation of the selected poems of Humberto Ak'abal, *If Today Were Tomorrow*, is forthcoming from Milkweed Editions.



Books of Humberto Ak'abal

## Purchase books by Humberto Ak'abal

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## The Future of Gaming with 3D Online Slots

Our Friends · Monday, May 8th, 2023

The world of online slots has evolved over the years, from the classic fruit machines of old to the modern video slots of today. One of the latest advancements in online slots is the use of 3D graphics technology to create a more immersive and engaging gaming experience.

3D online slots are games that use advanced graphics technology to create a 3D environment for players. Unlike traditional 2D slots, 3D slots feature enhanced visual effects, realistic sound effects, and animations that make the game feel more like a real-world experience. These games often have more detailed and interactive symbols, and they may offer additional bonus features and mini-games to keep players engaged.

### Here are the benefits of playing a 3D Online Slot:

- Immerse yourself in an incredibly realistic gaming experience, thanks to stunning 3D graphics and animations.
- Indulge in a more engaging and interactive game that truly captures the feeling of playing in a physical casino.
- Take your pick from a diverse range of themes and topics, covering everything from fantasy realms to popular movies and TV shows.
- Unleash exciting bonus features and mini-games, unlocking even more chances to win big.
- Explore intricate symbols and animations that bring your favorite themes to life in breathtaking detail.

- Embrace the future of online gaming with state-of-the-art technology that takes your gaming experience to the next level.
- Lose yourself in the thrill and excitement of the game, as you watch the symbols spin and transform before your eyes.
- Benefit from advanced gaming features, such as free spins and multipliers, that require greater processing power and bandwidth.
- Join a global community of players and share your gaming victories and experiences with friends and fellow gamers.
- Customize your gaming experience to suit your preferences with a variety of options, creating a truly personalized gaming experience.

Another advantage of 3D [online slots](#) is that they often offer more bonus features and mini-games than traditional slots. These bonus features can range from free spins and multipliers to interactive mini-games where players can win extra prizes. These features can be triggered by certain symbols or combinations, adding an extra layer of excitement to the game.

One thing to keep in mind when playing 3D online slots is that they can be more resource-intensive than traditional slots. Because of the enhanced graphics and animations, these games may require more processing power and bandwidth to run smoothly. This means that players may need a more powerful computer or a faster internet connection to enjoy these games to their fullest.

3D online slots also offer the chance for players to enjoy their gaming on a more personalized level. Players can customize certain aspects of the game, such as the soundtrack or the speed of the spins, to suit their preferences. This means that each player can create a gaming experience that is tailored to their tastes.

While the level of detail in 3D online slots is impressive, it does come at a cost. These games require more processing power and bandwidth than traditional 2D slots, which can mean that some players may experience lag or other issues if their computer or internet connection is not up to par. However, for those with the necessary hardware, the benefits of 3D online slots are more than worth it.

## Conclusion

Overall, 3D online slots offer an exciting and immersive gaming experience that is sure to appeal to players of all levels. Whether you're a seasoned slots player or a newbie just starting out, these games are sure to keep you entertained for hours on end. With their stunning graphics, engaging bonus features, and a wide variety of themes, 3D online slots are the future of online gaming. So why not give them a try today and see for yourself what all the fuss is about?

*Photo by [DEAR](#) on [Unsplash](#)*

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## Beverly Hills Goes Bollywood

Ann Haskins · Sunday, May 7th, 2023

Hip-Hop, modern, ballet, tap, and South Asian dance are blended with more than a soupçon of Bollywood as choreographer Achinta S. McDaniel and her **Blue13 Dance Company** return to the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Arts on May 12 & 13.

While her work draws on a range of dance genres, the Bollywood element is what initially catches attention. In a recent interview, McDaniel contended that the confluence of styles are part of what defines her choreography as both contemporary and American.



Blue13 Dance Company. Photo courtesy of the artists

“My family is from India. I was born here. What contemporary dance looks like to me as a South-Asian-American is going to differ from white-Euro-centric modern dance traditions like Paul Taylor or Martha Graham. Hip hop, Bollywood, it’s all contemporary,” McDaniel suggests. “I still employ and respect classical Indian dance like Kathak, but I also adore my modern dance roots and my ballet roots and my tap roots, and all those show up for me because I’m bi-cultural. So an audience may see a section that is Bollywood, then hip hop then modern. The five works we chose for this program reflect all that.”

Blue13 performed at the Wallis on February 21, 2020, two weeks before the Covid 19 pandemic shutdown.

“After three years with theaters closed and not being able to gather dancers or an audience, I’m bursting with wanting to have a big, stunning group of dancers on that stage,” McDaniel enthused. For these performances the company brings 18 dancers to the stage, more than the eight to ten Blue13 takes on tour.



Blue13 Dance Company in “Shaadi.” Photo by Robert Gomez

That pleasure in performing again is reflected in the most buoyant work on the program, *Shaadi Medley*, a mix of contemporary, Bollywood, Bangra, and hip hop that captures the flavor of a wedding in India. Produced in late summer 2021 as an immersive, site specific event at the Heritage Square Museum, the outdoor work reflected caution but also the short-lived optimism that the pandemic might finally be subsiding.

“*Shaadi* means wedding in Hindi,” McDaniel translated. “The dancers initially present the colorful public face of the wedding before vignettes show what was really going on with this family and guests behind closed doors. We’re doing some parts of that larger work.”



Blue 13 Dance Company. Photo courtesy of the artists

A year after *Shaadi*, summer 2022 found Blue13 at REDCAT’s much-admired New Original



Works (NOW) Festival with *Restless autumn, restless spring*.

McDaniel's choreography focused on the isolation and separation during the pandemic as well as the subsequent reawakening of artistic and human collaboration. Dancers wrote on the floor in different colors of chalk, the colors spreading and blending as the dancers began moving. In her review for LA Dance Chronicle, Grace Courvoisier wrote the effect of "blending, blending, blending colors, until the original hue is wiped clean completely resonated within me when it comes to our own melting pot of a country. The commentary of coming together in shared experiences, identities, and memories to live in one experience to never be recreated again was extremely beautiful and terribly nostalgic all at once."

Another work very close to McDaniel's heart is *1947* and the aftermath of the partition of India and Pakistan.

"1947 considers how the mood at end of British colonial rule was initially celebratory, but then the seismic partition into India and Pakistan devolved into brutal power struggles that threw previously peaceful, co-existing communities into a civil war, sending millions into exile including my grandparents," McDaniel explains.



Blue13 Dance Company in "1947." Photo courtesy of the artists

Starting in 2015, McDaniel interviewed different people who experienced the events after partition including McDaniel's father and her late grandmother. In the course of the interviews, McDaniel learned her maternal grandmother had to leave in the dead of night after someone warned her parents that there was a plan to kidnap their daughter.

McDaniel's grandparents were Sikhs and lived in the Lahore region which is now Pakistan. "From those interviews, everyone had been living peacefully, Hindi, Muslim, Sikhs and others. Nothing divided them before Partition, but the after effects caused so much hatred, so much pain," McDaniel described. "The thing that strikes me most and makes me the saddest is they all left thinking they would come back, and that fleeing was only temporary. Many of those who fled witnessed or were victims of the atrocities, and over a million people, some say about 2 million people died." McDaniel thinks that if asked, any South Asian, no matter of which generation, knows what Partition is, but many in the audience have no idea because it isn't included in the



American school system.

“These are difficult matters to dance about, but it’s something I think is just so important to bring this history to fore here in the United States,” she added. “But the message that you are no longer allowed here or your religion is not allowed here is not limited to South Asia and Partition. We see it happen all over the world. It’s relatable to so many people whether today’s refugees in Bangladesh, Ukrainians fleeing Russian bombs, or historical situations where Jews fled Nazi Germany or the northern migration of African-Americans with the onset of the South’s Jim Crow laws,” McDaniel emphasizes.



Blue13 Dance Company. Photo courtesy of the artists

The choreographer finalized *1947* while she of the faculty at USC Kaufman School of Dance last year. “When USC told me I had 44 dancers, I knew the time had come and exactly what I wanted to do. Of course, now it’s been adapted for 18 dancers,” she said.

One encore from that 2020 Wallis performance, *Dear Mr. Khan*, addresses another type of tyranny. In her review for Artsmeme, critic Debra Levine described the work as “a *cri de couer* of a modern multicultural woman.” Video of the work shows hoop skirts descending onto the dancers, the vintage undergarment becoming a symbol of oppression and resistance.



Blue13 Dance Company. Photo by Daniel Valentine

McDaniel also talked about *Sounds Like Whoop, Looks Like Flash*, her work in progress focused on issues of isolation and trying to conform to models or to present images that are not real.

“Even before the Covid shutdown, I’d been curious for many years about how the flattened, curated images of self that we put out through social media like Instagram and tick tock, aren’t real. They disguise the reality of the things we live with, things like disability, addiction, or family trauma that we’ve gone through,” McDaniel said. “Thinking about the things we’ve been through as humans in the last three years, it also felt like a very timely moment for the piece considering where I am in my life and career looking inward.”

“I think coming from an Indian home and as a first generation Indian woman born in America, all of my works have talked a little bit about two sides, like the feeling of being torn in two pieces—one part as a bi-cultural dancer and the other as the child of immigrant parents, always never quite Indian enough, never quite ‘American’ enough,” McDaniel explained. “Immigrant culture often encourages presenting a self that always smiles, that fits in, that we belong here and with that goal of assimilation. The constant message is to be excellent, be beautiful, be the best, study the hardest, get the best grades. That’s what I grew up with. While my parents are the biggest supporters of my work as an artist, that perfect facade is not real. Yet equally unreal is the other media image in the U.S. where Indians are shown throwing the colorful powder at Holi. Indian immigrants are much more nuanced, just like other cultures.”

McDaniel provided a primer on Bollywood, Bangla and Kathak, the three types of South Asian dance she employs.

She noted that there are multiple film industries in India, but Bollywood is the nickname for the Mumbai based Hindi film industry that annually produces hundreds of musical films. McDaniel described Bollywood films as often over three hours long, with lip-synching, usually a love story, multiple dance numbers with large unison casts of background dancers, and the dance numbers are over the top and lyrical, both art and entertainment.



Blue13 Dance Company. Photo by Anne Slattery

“I think Bollywood is the most recognizable Indian dance because of that connection with film and perhaps it’s resemblance to the Busby Berkeley dance numbers in the classic Hollywood musicals,” McDaniel said. “It’s an infectious escapism that looks so easy, has a universal attraction, and its profile has been amplified by social media.”

“Bangra is a Punjabi folk form of dance and music that uses a dhol drum, a type of two sided drum, and is characterized by a celebratory joy whether it’s celebrating the wheat harvest or just getting together. There’s lots of shoulder movements, dancers in formations, and considerable high energy bouncing. When I teach it, I say to bounce as if the floor is a trampoline,” she described.

McDaniel pointed out that while India has eight classical dance forms, Kathak which she uses, is the only one from Northern India, the rest are from Southern India.

“It’s known as the straight leg dance because it’s not in that sort of wide turned-out plié we see in the other Southern dance forms,” McDaniel noted, adding, “Like all classical dance from India, Kathak is rooted in story telling. There’s heavy rhythmic footwork, turns, lots of hands and arms and facial expression to tell the story.”





Blue13 Dance Company. Photo by Jordan Strauss

“I appreciate and honor the other classical Indian dance forms, but Punjabi heritage made Kathak a natural fit. It changed my life. It changed my approach to how I think about rhythm, how I talk, how I teach,” she confessed.

MacDaniel grew up studying ballet, tap, jazz, and modern, only coming to Kathak as an adult. After graduating from NYU in dance, she realized her focus had been exclusively white, Euro-centric dance. She decided to confront her heritage and spent six months in India intensively engaged in Kathak trainings.



Achinta S. McDaniel. Photo by Earl McDaniel

On her return, McDaniel settled in New York and started a dance company. The move to California came when her bi-coastal romantic relationship evolved into a marriage proposal that required moving to California where her husband was in film.



“My New York friends said are you crazy? You’re starting a company here. Why are you going to LA? There’s no dance in LA,” McDaniel recounted. “But then, my husband said are you going to take that lying down? If anyone can do it, it is you. He knew I could not resist that kind of challenge.” McDaniel chuckled.

The choreographer admits when she first arrived, she thought her friends were right and the move was crazy. But soon, McDaniel found various worlds colliding all at once, and a good way.

She started teaching classes, introducing Bollywood which no one was teaching at the time.

“South Asians were excited because there now were Bollywood classes and non-South Asians at the studios came in wondering what Bollywood was,” McDaniel recalled. “At the same time, I was starting a dance company that I saw as contemporary until I recognized I was again compartmentalizing my ‘Indian-ness’ separate from being American and I realized my work could reflect that multiplicity.”

More than 20 years later, McDaniel’s insight about the strength of that duality continues to fuel Blue13, including this return visit to The Wallis. She is quick to say her New York friends were wrong when they said there was no dance in LA.



Blue13 Dance Company. Photo by Denise Leitner

“The dance community here is constantly overlooked. It forever feels like we’re knocking on the door. Ironically, it’s easier to find presenters on tour than to find presenters here in LA.”



She gave credit to The Wallis as one of the few major venues consistently presenting her company and other LA-based dance.

“The Wallis is a great example of how a venue can be successful when presenting local dance communities. It has recognized there are all these incredible dance companies in the backyard of all these presenting venues in LA. I hope those other presenters come and see the value in our local dance community. The Wallis has become a central place that we can look to and it’s great that it is hosting us and other local companies.”

Blue13 dancers include Alisa Carreras, Arjun Kochhar, Atticus Dobbie, Bella Allen, Brenan Gonzalez, Chelsea Correa, Emily Carr, Esi Samuels, Felisya Soqui-Garcia, Hayden Rivas, Janae Holster, Malachi Stevens, Moira Saxena, Onye Stevenson, Presley Hawk, Satori Folkes-Stone, Shea Hancock, William Okajima.

**Blue13 at Wallis Annenberg Center for the Arts, 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills; Fri.-Sat., May 12-13, 7:30 pm, \$29-\$79. [The Wallis](#).**

Posted in [Music](#), [Politics](#), [Dance](#), [Performing](#) | [No Comments »](#)

## Matthew E. Henry: Two Poems

Matthew E. Henry · Friday, May 5th, 2023

### when asked to read a poem for the Black History Month assembly

the vice principal kept his hand on the fire alarm.  
the principal dialed 9 and 1, her trembling finger  
poised over the final digit. the superintendent  
scoured district bylaws to find a fireable offense.  
at least one guidance counselor had pooped her pants.

before I picked up the microphone, most sneaker squeaks  
and side conversations ceased. all the auditorium-ed ears  
waited for whatever out of pocket thing they thought I’d say,  
rehearsed the list of “incidents” they were sure I’d mention.  
the whispered events some labeled “racist,” other called  
“accidents” or “unfortunate” they were convinced  
I’d put on blast. some shifted uncomfortably thinking  
of things overheard—in classrooms, the caf, a car—, or  
remembered things they thought, said, done themselves.

before I started reading, some internally argued about  
the existence of “white privilege” and “white fragility,”  
mentally hosted an Oppression Olympics—a broad jump  
comparing slavery and the Jim Crow era to the horrors  
their own ancestors faced, regardless their nation of origin.

asked themselves when “our month, our assembly” would be,  
clenched fists folded under crossed arms.

before I opened my mouth, some asked why I had to be  
so divisive, why school had to be so “woke”—somehow  
making the word sound like it started with an “n,” ended  
with a hard “er”—while others smiled, rubbed hands,  
there for all the smoke.

after I finished reading, the tension in the room remained  
unabsorbed by the white and wood panels covering the walls,  
which I thought was strange since I read a poem  
about why squirrels are infinitely superior to dogs.

\*

## **thank you, systemic racism**

for making shoplifting easier—  
as you coon hunt me around the store,  
the white boys I paid, pick-pocket  
a Christmas wish list for my kids.

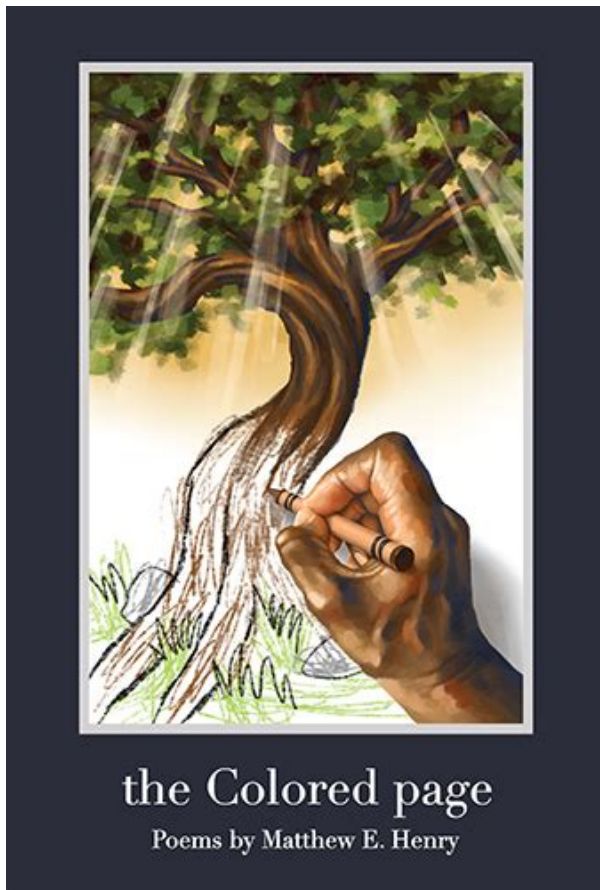
for believing centuries of cotton fields,  
fire hoses, and batons have hardened our bodies—  
crucible cured our skin—to hold more pain, denying  
me opioids after my car crash, saving the heroin  
and fentanyl statistics for your own.

for the welcomed elbow room  
on buses, planes, and trains, whether  
or not I turn up the Adjei-Brenyah  
of my Blackness.

for your Sambo-ing sight at recess,  
in gym class, and all musical ensembles  
where I was picked early, gifted with more  
than 10,000 hours to live up to your assumptions.

for the paradoxical irony  
of low expectations—your dim light  
making college professors and employer  
impressed by my slightest effort, blinded  
by the black star of my brilliance.

\*



*the Colored page* by Matthew E. Henry

**Purchase *the Colored page* by Matthew E. Henry**

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## ***Oscar, Prima, 1976: Striking Stars***

David Sheward · Wednesday, May 3rd, 2023

The 2022-23 Broadway season ends with a trio of productions featuring dazzling star-level performances. Sean Hayes delivers one of the most powerful and versatile turns in a straight Broadway play in many seasons in Doug Wright's somewhat flawed, but ultimately absorbing and entertaining play, *Good Night, Oscar*, now at the Belasco after a run at Chicago's Goodman Theater. Wright continues his streak of plays and musicals about real-life figures and stories such as *I Am My Own Wife*, *War Paint*, *Hands on a Hard Body*, and *Grey Gardens*. This time his biographical gaze turns to Oscar Levant, celebrated wit, movie musical second banana, composer, concert pianist, and famous hypochondriac and mental case. Levant's schtick consisted of wry cynicism and ribbing his illnesses—imagined and real. He was a dryly comic personality playing the sidekick in several classic films such as *Romance on the High Seas*, *An American in Paris*, *The Band Wagon*, and *The Barkleys of Broadway*. His brilliance as a musician and songwriter were overshadowed by that of his best friend George Gershwin whose songs and concert pieces Levant endlessly played instead of his own works.





Ben Rappaport and Sean Hayes in *Good Night, Oscar*.

Credit: Joan Marcus

Wright takes an actual event—Levant’s live appearance on *The Tonight Show* starring Jack Paar (smooth Ben Rappaport) in 1958—and turns it into a searing portrait of Levant’s dazzling talent and crushing self-loathing. Wright raises the stakes by having Levant out on a pass from a mental facility. His long-suffering wife (sturdily supportive Emily Bergl) has finagled his temporary absence with a lie (she told the doctors their daughter was graduating high school) in order to have her neurotic husband prove his worth to himself and an audience of millions. Meanwhile, Paar is under pressure from the network, represented by president Bob Sarnoff (properly stuffy Peter Grosz) to keep the loose-tongued Levant on a short leash. To add to the mayhem, just before airtime, Oscar downs a medicine chest full of pills, stolen from the supplies of his attendant Alvin (Marchant Davis doing his best with a functional role).

Hayes, heretofore best known as the hyper-kinetic, outrageously out Jack on the long-running *Will and Grace* sitcom, is equally over the top here, but also completely believable as the jittery celebrity. His physical life perfectly suits the frayed Levant’s desperate state. He seems ready to jump out of his skin at any moment. Barely able to hold his frayed nerves together, he spits out witticisms and one-liners like a marksman using his jokes as bullets to demolish his demons. As if that weren’t enough, Hayes caps the evening with a concert-level, idiosyncratic piano solo of Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*, conveying not only Levant’s interpretative genius but also the character’s insecurities and broiling inner conflicts. My only quarrel with this otherwise superb portrayal is Hayes’ attempt to sound like Levant which comes across as a slurred Jimmy Stewart imitation.



Emily Bergl and Sean Hayes in *Good Night, Oscar*.

Credit: Joan Marcus

While the central characterization by actor and playwright is spot-on, the supporting figures come across as devices to further the plot, provide exposition or a foil for Levant's unconventional, scorching humor. (As noted, the actors are all fine in their limning.) Sarnoff represents the staid, milquetoast attitude of 1950s mass media just so Oscar can tear him down when the network prez cautions the unstable guest star to steer clear of any controversial topics. Studio gofer and Sarnoff's nephew Max (very funny Alex Wyse) is a rabid movie fan ready to supply facts about Levant's career. Alvin just happens to have a decent singing voice so he can croon a bit of his patient's most memorable ballad "Blame It on My Youth" as evidence of Levant's blighted talent. Wright even has the ghost of Gershwin (dapper John Zdrojeski, glibly dismissing Levant's gifts as second-rate) appear in two extended and overlong fantasy sequences (the second is largely unnecessary).

Director Lisa Peterson's staging balances the laughs and pathos, hitting the right notes in sequence for a symphony of sympathy for Levant's tortured condition. Rachel Hauck's versatile set creates the right atmosphere of 1950s style and glamour while Emilio Sosa's costumes carefully define the characters' emotional and social status. Though *Good Night* has its sharps and flats, the naturals, particularly Hayes' memorable performance, make up for any off notes.



Jodie Comer in *Prima Facie*.

Credit: Bronwen Sharp

Also handing in one of the acting highlights of this or any other season is Jodie Comer in Suzie Miller's explosive solo play *Prima Facie*, at the Golden Theater after an Olivier-winning run in London. Comer runs the proverbial gamut of emotions from A to way beyond Z as Tessa, a high-powered British barrister who mostly represents criminal defendants accused of sexual assault. The tables are turned when Tessa herself is the victim of an attack by a fellow lawyer and she must undergo the degrading process of seeking justice in a male-dominated court system.

The title is Latin for first impressions and ours of Tessa is one of confidence bordering on arrogance as she details the steps of cross-examining an uncertain witness and reveling in her judicial prowess. Comer is remarkably subtle in her depiction of Tessa's non-nonsense demeanor. There's nothing mean or nasty about her, she's just briskly self-assured about her place in the legal universe and that it's the right one. But after casual sex with a colleague turns ugly, Tessa's solid professional veneer is stripped away and set designer Miriam Buether's comforting solid walls of law books vanish, replaced by an empty, rain-soaked void, lit by Natasha Chivers like a nightmare. Comer heart-stoppingly conveys Tessa's parallel unravelling, peeling back her tough exterior to reveal the vulnerable, violated victim.





Jodie Comer in *Prima Facie*.

Credit: Bronwen Sharp

Miller blunts her powerful point by giving Tessa a climactic, Hollywood-ish courtroom speech where she takes apart the inequities in the standard legal procedures and makes a tearful emotional plea on behalf of sexual battery survivors. No judge would allow such pontification, however justified. Apart from this departure from harsh reality, *Prima* is prime drama, shattering and heartfelt in the extreme.



Laura Linney and Jessica Hecht in *Summer, 1976*.

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Credit: Jeremy Daniel

David Auburn's *Summer, 1976* is not exactly shattering, but does offer amazing actors Laura Linney and Jessica Hecht a chance to display their incomparable skills in bringing two keenly-observed women to life on stage. Auburn's two-hander produced by Manhattan Theater Club chronicles the friendship of Diana (Linney) and Alice (Hecht) which lasts for a few weeks during the titular season at an Ohio university. Diana is an art teacher and Alice is the wife of an economics professor. The two are brought together by their young daughters and there's a funny plot twist involving the faculty babysitting system. Auburn also delicately develops a theme of women and independence, not so subtly connected to the Bicentennial celebration of the setting. The format is the two sitting at a table against a neutral backdrop, telling us the story of their brief but intense connection. (John Lee Beatty designed the understated, tasteful environment transformed into a variety of settings by Japhy Weideman's painterly lighting). Daniel Sullivan, who previously staged Auburn's *Proof* and *The Columnist* for MTC, directs with sensitivity and subtlety.

The strongest point of this touching and endearing piece is Auburn's attention to detail in creating the two women. Their vocabulary and quirks are so individual, we get an immediate and deep sense of both. Diana, a bit of a snob, uses adjectives like jejune. We get a notion of her sensuality when she gets aroused by the smells of various art supplies and paints. Alice is down to earth and direct. She speaks in simple, declarative sentences. She has no qualms about reading popular best-sellers of the day like *Shogun* and *Coma*. She is largely comfortable with herself, though insecure and unsure of the strength of her marriage.



Laura Linney and Jessica Hecht in *Summer, 1976*.

Credit: Jeremy Daniel

Linney and Hecht further delineate the pair with just the right gestures and facial expressions. Linney's are always appropriate and dead-on. Just for a sample: her voice drips with contempt when describing Alice's reading habits and aches with regret when she recognizes the friendship may be fading. Hecht gives Alice a marvelously flat midwestern accent and within this range, she creates a galaxy of emotions, thoughts and attitudes from hilarious comic confusion when the babysitting system goes awry to earth-shattering shock when her marriage reaches a breaking point (As an added bonus, Linney also ably plays Doug, Alice's estranged husband.)

The plot is not remarkable, but *Summer, 1976* delivers a real and recognizable slice of the everyday, brought to quivering life by Linney and Hecht, joining Sean Hayes and Jodie Comer as the top performers of the end of a memorable Broadway season.

***Good Night, Oscar:* April 24—Aug. 27. Belasco Theatre, 111 W. 44th St., NYC. Running time: one hour and 40 mins. with no intermission. Telecharge**



***Prima Facie*: April 23—July 2. Golden Theater, 252 W. 45th St., NYC. Running time: 100 mins. with no intermission. Telecharge**

***Summer, 1976*: April 25—June 18. Manhattan Theater Club at the Samuel J. Friedman Theater, 261 W. 47th St., NYC. Running time: 90 mins. with no intermission. Telecharge**

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## Elizabeth McGovern Is Riveting as Ava Gardner

Steve Gottfried · Tuesday, May 2nd, 2023

Considered one of Hollywood's most glamorous leading ladies of her era, Ava Gardner's off-screen romances rivaled those of Liz Taylor. Playing now through May 14<sup>th</sup> at the Geffen Playhouse, Elizabeth McGovern excavates her legacy in *Ava: The Secret Conversations*. The play, written by McGovern, is adapted from a book based on a series of interviews between Gardner and her biographer Peter Evans. The role fits McGovern like a pair of vintage gloves. But it is by no means a vanity piece.

Instead, it offers a very human portrait of a woman looking back on a life in the spotlight with a jaundiced eye but who never lost sight of the girl from Grabtown, North Carolina and her humble beginnings.

Asked what it was like bringing Gardner's story to the stage, McGovern said "It's this kind of passing of the torch from actress to actress and generation to generation. It's a wonderful, invisible thread, and I do feel it."



Elizabeth McGovern as Ava Gardner in *Ava: The Secret Conversations*

As the play begins, Ms. Gardner is 60 years old, living in an elegant London residence, two years into recovery from a stroke which left her physically and financially impaired. It's for the latter

reason that she agrees to team up with a British writer named Peter Evans (played by Aaron Costa Ganis) to pen her autobiography. As she is famously quoted in the play: “I either write the book or sell the jewels, and I’m kinda sentimental about the jewels.” Financial incentive is something Ava and Peter share in common, with Peter temporarily setting aside his loftier literary ambitions as a great novelist in exchange for a lucrative celebrity tell-all in order to support his family. This three-person play also stars Ryan W. Garcia as Evans’ literary agent who is heard in voiceover but never seen onstage.

Boozy, bawdy and brilliant, McGovern delivers a performance as multi-faceted as Ms. Gardner’s jewels. And while this is an undeniable star turn for McGovern, the play succeeds by virtue of the interplay between her and her biographer, played to perfection by Aaron Costa Ganis. Peter is tasked with walking a tightrope, enthralled by the grandeur of Gardner’s legacy while trying to extract salacious tidbits about her relationships with her famous exes which included three failed marriages to Mickey Rooney, Frank Sinatra and Artie Shaw as well as a 20-year-long relationship with Howard Hughes.

The play interweaves theatrical flashbacks with Gardner and her famous exes with Ganis taking on the personas of the men in her life, giving the audience a taste of the interpersonal dynamics. This theatrical conceit might have been a risk, but it works in large part due to the writing as well as Ganis’ chameleon-like ability to take on the men in her life. In the process, he finds himself being drawn under her spell. It’s a dance of sorts which evolves into a tango and ultimately ends with a twist.



Aaron Costa Ganis and Elizabeth McGovern co-star in “Ava: The Secret Conversations”

From a production standpoint, “Ava: The Secret Conversations” captures the Old Hollywood glamour of Gardner’s existence even though the play is set in London in the 1980s where Gardner lived toward the latter part of her life. The production elements are beautifully in synch from the pitch-perfect set design by David Meyer to the evocative wardrobe by Toni-Lesli James to the



vintage film and photographs projected onstage and the period music, all of which transport the audience back in time.

As Elizabeth McGovern says in a promotional video for the play: “It’s a play about movies and the impact that the movie business had (and has) on the people who are its stars. I hope people feel viscerally what it might have been like to be in her position.” By this reviewer’s estimation, I say *mission accomplished*.

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(Images by Jeff Lorch)

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## Judy and I

Julissa Padilla · Monday, May 1st, 2023

A dusty house falling down into a colorful world of fantasy. I didn’t know it at the time but it would change my life forever. When Dorothy walked into this world of fantasy, I saw myself in her. This innocent young woman exploring what life had thrust upon her and learning how to deal with the journey but ultimately realizing what you brought and where you come from are what’s most important and what makes you unique.

That young woman was a 16-year-old named Judy Garland. You have to have been living under a rock if you have never heard of *The Wizard of Oz* but unfortunately Judy Garland is a lot less common than this iconic film.



The first time I ever heard of Judy Garland, I was 12 years old, almost the same age as her when she got her film contract with Metro Goldwyn Mayer. Instead of me performing in front of a camera like her, I was learning everything that was happening behind the scenes. Her next film I watched was *Meet Me in St Louis*. By the time this film was shot, she was used to playing roles more close to her own age. As Esther Smith, she was the embodiment of a naive young woman just looking for love in an indifferent world filled with dead ends at every corner. I was able to sing along to each of her songs and it made me feel an instant connection towards her. She expressed similar feelings I had about love and how she felt about herself. She would also sing a lot of happy songs just to be happy.

After class, I would do my own research on who Judy was, what she was like, just anything I was able to get my hands on. She was born Frances Ethel Gumm to a couple of parents who worked in vaudeville. She loved to sing at an early age and would be known as “the girl with the great big voice.” Her family moved to Los Angeles and there she was growing increasingly more popular. She signed up with MGM without realizing how much this would affect her life for the good and the bad.

An early tragedy happened to her when she lost her father to meningitis which affected her immensely, never really recovering from it especially since he was one of her biggest allies. Early

on she sang songs of love, losing love, being happy and anything in between.

Most of her songs had a feeling of yearning for something more, something better. Take her most iconic song, “Over the Rainbow.” She is longing for that better world, why can’t she be a part of that world? This kept inspiring me to always try to get on the other side of success no matter the troubles that I may encounter ahead which has helped my continual optimism towards life.

When Judy was growing up at the studio, she was always compared to the other woman at the lot, never feeling like she was attractive or even pretty. She was brought on as a child prodigy so the studio had no idea how to present her to the world; considering she was too old to play a child star and too young to play adult roles. They would cast her as kid sisters or performance acts to highlight her extraordinary singing talent.

Judy came at a perfect time in my life when I was coming of age as well. There was a point where I was feeling so awkward in my body. Growing up from a girl into a woman, I felt awkward and I didn’t know how to react. When I was in elementary school, I was the complete tomboy. I didn’t like makeup, I didn’t like dresses (only shorts and pants), and I hated princesses. I pretty much only had guy friends, loved playing little kid sports, and just was obsessed with cartoons, Pokemon, and animation. Once I hit puberty, I was feeling awkward with my appearance. I had crushes with boys from my classes but I never felt I was ever able to get their attention.

Judy came at a time I needed her most. She sang songs of exactly what I was feeling. She felt she was the ugly duckling and that is what I felt in my early pubescent days. There is a song she sings in the film *Andy Hardy Meets Debutante* called “Alone.” It is about how much she loves the main character, Andy but he never sees her love for him but she will be there when he does come around with open arms. That was the same sentiment I was feeling when I liked someone in class. I will be there when they are ready. She would say lines like, “No glamor, no glamor at all.”

I connected with these lines when I was growing up. I never felt pretty despite my mother telling me I was. She sang songs of one day growing out of these insecurities and one day the boy will come to me. I didn’t have many friends growing up either. With my specific interests, I was only able to fully connect with my teachers. Whenever I felt alone, I would sing all these songs from her and it would always make me feel better. I would always tell myself there are brighter roads ahead.





Despite these insecurities, I would just keep watching all of her movies via Turner Classic Movies. She was so funny and tender in every role she played despite everything she was dealing with behind the scenes. Her and frequent costar, and my favorite actor, Mickey Rooney constantly had to be on for the camera, even if that meant a dose of amphetamines to keep them working long hours. This would eventually bring ruin to her life as she became increasingly hooked to the point of complete dependency.

I was always hungry to learn more about classic stars. I even tried to imitate how Judy sang. I tried learning how to sing because of her. She taught me how to feel a song and not just sing a song because it was there. Feel what you are singing. In one of my favorite songs she sang called "Smile" by Charlie Chaplin, it is about smiling no matter what and that you will get by.

This theme is a perfect song to sum up what Judy wanted for the world. She wanted everyone to know that there is a rainbow on the other side no matter what you are going through. That is why she is my favorite singer. She kept me optimistic even in my life's darkest times.

She taught me how to love me for who I am and never bother with what other people tell you. I remember crying myself to sleep thinking I was never going to find someone who would love me in a romantic way. Though Judy was falling in and out of love, she always knew how to pull

herself up.

This is a message for every single person. We all go through hardships. It is how you deal with them and pull yourself up to help inspire others. That is what will always make me connect with Judy Garland to find my own path to my own rainbow.

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## Saundra BC: “Distractions”

Saundra BC · Friday, April 28th, 2023

### Distractions

Wake up early morning  
Write out today’s agenda  
Stick to the schedule I say  
Ok, no problem, I’m writing it down so nothing will get in the way  
Before I can complete the thought  
I’m reminded of something left undone  
I’ll go and do this one thing, then get started on my list when I return

Start working, but the phone rings  
Someone needs something, my attention is now broken  
Get them through their crisis  
A quick meditation to relocate my focus  
Now back on track but then a knock at the door  
Who on earth can that be, oh sorry, wrong place, we were looking for number four  
Yeah, ok, no problem, I’ll just go back to work now, start again — once more

First thing on the list, let me get down to it,  
Then the loud weather system sends an alert — take cover now, so you don’t get hurt  
Shut that thing off I say, it’s breaking my concentration!  
I have to get this work completed, no room for excuses, there’s a truckload that’s due

Stop, listen, your work can wait, from the weather system take your cue

A sign on the wall above my head — please, no more distractions!  
Just one hour of peace y’all hear me when I say  
This work, I must finish, go find something else to do  
Give me a moment of silence — yes, hush the distractions until I am through.

(Featured image from [Pixabay](#))

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