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## **Dance; CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK; A film fest propelled by movement; [HOME EDITION]**

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**Full Text** (1495 words)

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It's fitting that the classic 1948 British ballet feature "The Red Shoes" is the highest-profile inclusion in this year's Dance Camera West Festival, for the film's combustible mix of dancing, love and madness turns up repeatedly in the monthlong festival's 36 other offerings.

Now in its third year, Dance Camera West is directed by Lynette Kessler and Kelly Hargraves, former dancers who set out to expose local audiences to a hybrid art that isn't widely available here. "There's a festival in New York that's been going for 30 years," Kessler said this month, "and one in London, Paris, Amsterdam, Athens, Monte Carlo, Barcelona, Toronto, Seattle and San Francisco."

Kessler and Hargraves thought it crazy that there wasn't one in the capital of the film industry, and they started by selecting films from other festivals. Now, however, they call for submissions, and this year there were more than 200 entries. Said Hargraves: "We sort of have this traveling cinema idea -- bringing the dance to the people in different ways." The pair chose to spotlight "The Red Shoes" this year because it contains what Kessler called "the quintessential choreography made to be seen on-screen."

Set for June 16 at the John Anson Ford Amphitheatre, "The Red Shoes" also reflects this festival's focus on the backstage pressures of the dance world -- though several of its most distinctive films ignore theatrical dance entirely in favor of something more primal.

Shot on five continents by Michelle Mahrer and Nicole Ma, the spectacular "Dances of Ecstasy" (June 11 at the El Rey Theatre) juxtaposes cultures and religions to try to show how dance renews and deepens the sense of community and oneness with nature that Western societies have lost. Forget dance as entertainment. Dance here is a form of healing, a means to transcend egocentric isolation, a pathway to God.

There's even a medical explanation for the way that dance induces mystical states of being: Vibrations from the dancer's movement travel up the spine to the base of the brain, producing ecstasy or trance. And you can see that theory put into practice in one

"Ecstasy" sequence after another -- none more engulfing than the phenomenal Moroccan women's dances of spiritual possession.

Many of this film's thematic preoccupations recur in "Anna Halprin: Returning Home," Andy Abrahams Wilson's profile of a great postmodern innovator (June 13 at the UCLA Hammer Museum). Here, though, we do need some perspective on Halprin's extraordinary impact and influence on the concert dance world. Without it, we are left with nothing but a gorgeously shot valentine to a lovable eccentric who likes to paint herself blue and sit naked in a forest, smearing herself with mud.

The festival's backstage/offstage focus becomes most evident, and sometimes problematic, in the other documentaries screening at the Hammer Museum. Many of the filmmakers had access to some of the rarest footage imaginable, but they remain stingy with these treasures, as if there was an unwritten law: No dance sequence will last longer than the minimum time it takes to illustrate a spoken insight.

In other words, dance itself isn't allowed to speak through its own means, whether we're watching Annette von Wangenheim's exhaustively researched study of the origins of German dance theater, "Kurt Jooss: A Commitment to Dance" (June 13), or Tonia Shimin's engaging biography of a pioneering American dancer, choreographer and teacher, "Mary Anthony: A Life in Modern Dance" (June 20).

There's plenty of classroom footage and interview tributes in these films. But if Jooss' 1932 epic "The Green Table" and Anthony's 1956 dance drama "Threnody" are as important as we're told, we should see more than tantalizing fragments -- or the slick little linked dissolves used to obliterate major choreography in Evann Siebens' "Jose Limon: Moving Into the Future" (June 20), an otherwise thoughtful look at how a company survives its founder's death.

Devotedly and sometimes glumly educational, these documentaries give Dance Camera West intellectual weight, but it's the short experimental collaborations between choreographers and film or video directors that supply the kinetic muscle and sense of immediacy.

REDCAT launches the festival Friday with two nights of these flights of fancy -- and you'd better get there on time for the first program or you'll miss Reynir Lyngdal and Katrin Hall's wildly accomplished comic short, "Burst," from Iceland. Here a man's stifled sexual needs lead to bravura domestic warfare and then -- when a bulging faucet suddenly bursts (ah, symbolism!) -- a kind of postmodern aquacade ensues. You want dancing, love and madness, plus a flood that might daunt even Noah? Seek no further.

Beyond its other achievements, the film is a testament to Icelandic craftsmanship, for where else in the world would a bedroom be utterly watertight?

Many of the other REDCAT films place dancers in unusual or picturesque settings, often compromising dance values in pursuit of novel manipulations of time and imagery.

Indeed, the big cliché of the 2004 festival is footage that has been shot or processed so the dancing looks blurred, even at its correct (natural or original) speed. It's as if these directors don't want us to get involved in movement itself, only the larger context or overview of a scene.

Indeed, American director-choreographer Andrew Wass' pithy "Collateral Damage" (Saturday) uses no dancers at all but adopts stop-motion animation techniques to create a whimsical pas de deux for two war toys. It ends abruptly with a title slide that's anything but whimsical: "How many have died because of an unelected lying president?"

At the other extreme, British director-choreographer Chris Ho looks with a sculptor's eye at human anatomy in "Second Hand" (also Saturday), isolating limbs in close-up and making the simplest actions momentous.

Working with six choreographers, Catherine Maximoff manages to deliver satisfactions to both dance fans and the film crowd in her atmospheric French short "Uzes Quintet" (Friday), a cavalcade of dancing highlighted by some awesome contortion solos and duets by the members of Collectif Peeping Tom.

Besides its scheduled screenings, Dance Camera West will offer audiences an opportunity to view all the other submissions at EZTV in Santa Monica -- plus a closing-night outdoor film "happening" in Coldwater Canyon Park that will use objects in nature as projection screens. The real novelty, however, may be the inclusion of a work adapted from the stage, a familiar dance-for-camera genre that the festival usually ignores.

On the Saturday REDCAT program, Edouard Lock's "Amelia" is the same "Amelia" that Lock's Canadian company, La La La Human Steps, performed at UCLA in November -- but utterly different in design and mood.

The 80-minute stage "Amelia" embraced darkness and mystery, with dancers and musicians constantly moving in and out of view behind webbed scenic panels. The 60-minute film "Amelia" explores facets of brightness, with the dancers materializing inside a giant wooden humidifier that seems to have no exits (except maybe at the top), no place to hide.

Directed by Lock, "Amelia" is nothing but dance, brilliantly shot, relentlessly in your face, astonishingly fast. On film, though, Lock's choreography is humanized by what the darkness and distance camouflaged on the stage: which woman is getting wrinkles around her eyes, which man is going bald.

Even La La La firebrands age and flicker out. The lesson of "Amelia" -- and maybe of the festival itself -- is to dance this hard, this fast, this gloriously while you still can.

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A roaming festival

Dance Camera West runs from June 4 to 26 in six venues.

June 4 and 5: REDCAT, Walt Disney Concert Hall, 631 W. 2nd St., Los Angeles. 8 p.m. \$10. (213) 237-2800.

June 11: El Rey Theatre, 5515 Wilshire Blvd., L.A. \$17 (advance); \$22 (at the door). 8:30 p.m. Includes dance party. (323) 936-6400.

June 13 and 20: UCLA Hammer Museum, 10899 Wilshire Blvd., Westwood. 2 p.m. Free. (310) 443-7000.

June 16: John Anson Ford Amphitheatre, 2580 Cahuenga Blvd. East, Hollywood. \$10 (suggested donation). 8 p.m. (323) 461-3673.

June 23 to 26: EZTV Viewing Library, 1629 18th St., No. 6, 18th Street Arts Center, Santa Monica. Noon to 4 p.m. Free. (310) 829- 3389.

June 26: TreePeople "Outside the Edges" outdoor screening, Coldwater Canyon Park, 12601 Mulholland Drive, Los Angeles. 8 p.m. \$10. (213) 480-8633.

For further information: [www.dancecamerawest.org](http://www.dancecamerawest.org)

**[Illustration]**

Caption: PHOTO: SURVIVAL: Jose Limon is seen in Evann Siebens' thoughtful documentary about how a company responds to its founder's death.; PHOTOGRAPHER: Courtesy of Dance Camera West; PHOTO: COMICS: "Burst," a short with Kata Johnson and Elias Knudsen, blends dancing, love, madness and an impressive flood.; PHOTOGRAPHER: Courtesy of Dance Camera West; PHOTO: HUMANIZED: Edouard Lock's "Amelia" is the same work that his La La La Human Steps performed at UCLA in November but different in design and mood.; PHOTOGRAPHER: Courtesy of Dance Camera West; PHOTO: POLITICAL: "Collateral Damage" creates a pas de deux for two war toys.; PHOTOGRAPHER: Courtesy of Dance Camera West; PHOTO: SPECTACULAR: "Dances of Ecstasy" was shot on five continents.; PHOTOGRAPHER: Dances of Ecstasy; PHOTO: (no caption)

Credit: Times Staff Writer

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