



COVER STORY; Dance's movers -- and shakers; [HOME EDITION]

Victoria Looseleaf. **Los Angeles Times**. Los Angeles, Calif.: Jan 22, 2004. pg. E.34

Full Text (2240 words)

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"...Also woven into the REDCAT scene is Dance Camera West, a month long film festival launched in 2002.

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FULL ARTICLE:

For many local dance lovers, the silver cloud created by the first full season of dance at the Music Center has a dark lining: A good seat at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion can fetch \$75 or more, as high as at the other premier local dance venues, the Orange County Performing Arts Center and the Kodak Theatre in Hollywood. That's a lot even for coveted attractions, much less anything unfamiliar or experimental.

There is, however, an alternative. In fact, there are dozens. An array of great dance -- from bharata natyam, butoh, tap and folklorico to modern, jazz, flamenco and chamber ballet -- can be seen routinely throughout Los Angeles. As the city becomes a greater amalgamation of cultures, its dance scene grows equally diverse. What's more, in recent years not only has L.A. been a magnet for choreographers and dancers seeking a better quality of life -- it's certainly easier to live and work here than in New York, for example -- but the buzz about it has amped up: Talent attracts talent, artists are spreading the word, and our Pacific Rim hometown seems poised to take on the mantle of 21st century city.

And perhaps the best news of all about the thriving, energetic dance scene is that spectators can take it in for a reasonable price. You might even say that bargains are the name of the game in L.A. dance. At the hot new venue REDCAT, part of the Walt Disney Concert Hall, executive director Mark Murphy even makes six to eight tickets per performance available at no charge to people willing to usher.

"We may have a small house," Murphy says, "but it's important to not have seats go empty. Ushering is one method, but we're trying to explore others."

"It's a great moment in our city for dance," says Jordan Peimer, who programs performances at the Skirball Cultural Center.

"We used to have the same high-recognition names -- Graham, Limon, Bill T. Jones -- coming through. Now we're seeing more experimental companies from New York, Europe and Asia. L.A. is getting a nice cross section of what's out there now.

"I also think we have a better dance community now than five years ago in terms of local work," Peimer says. "A lot of choreographers have become stronger. We've had people move to town who have made a difference: Victoria Marks, Dan Froot, Rosanna Gamson. They've helped set the bar higher, and local choreographers have taken the challenge."

Highways Performance Space in Santa Monica, the Rolls-Royce of local alternative venues, has long been a champion of dance. The space, which seats as many as 120, flowered under Danielle Brazell, its artistic director from 1999 until she turned over the reins last month to Leo Garcia (who plans to keep dance a priority).

Brazell not only programmed countless local troupes but brought in such innovative out-of-town artists as the Seattle-based 33 Fainting Spells.

"Over the past four years, our dance programming has increased by at least 50% if not more," Brazell says. "Highways is an ideal venue for new work, because it is small and intimate. The work is intelligent, and artists are taking risks but bringing a distinctive aesthetic."

And a ticket will set you back a mere 16 bucks. Similarly, admission is just \$15 at the solar-powered Electric Lodge in nearby Venice. The profile of this venue -- opened in 1996 by Joel Shapiro, a part-time family physician who once performed with the local folk dance troupe Aman -- has been steadily rising. Shapiro programs about six weeks of dance a year to complement the theater and music also on his roster. In addition, butoh master Oguri not only performs but conducts workshops.

The Lodge is also home to Max 10 Performance Laboratory, co-produced by choreographer Cid Pearlman and David King. Now in its third year, the event, held the first Monday of every month, is open to anyone who wants to participate. It features 10 artists -- dancers, actors and musicians -- each performing a maximum of 10 minutes. It costs \$6.

"It's better than TV and cheaper than a movie," says Pearlman. "We wanted to make a performance lab where people could get good at what they do by practicing in front of a live audience. There's also a feedback component -- and free wine, beer, chips and sodas."

In the heart of Hollywood, meanwhile, a wild mix of dance can be found at the 284-seat Ivar Theatre, a onetime strip joint where Deborah Brockus and co-producer Daisy Kim present "Spectrum: Dance in L.A." In this two-night showcase series four times a year, 16 choreographers rock the house with genres including hip-hop, ballroom, Irish, Brazilian, swing, salsa, ballet, modern and jazz. The 18th installment, scheduled for next month, is a steal at \$20.

Says Brockus: "You understand what 'Dance' with a big D is when you come to 'Spectrum.' We have an amazing block of talent in L.A. that is just beginning to be explored. What's happened with dance on the large-scale theater and the smaller, local concert scene is growing by leaps and bounds."

At the Skirball center, Peimer, an unabashed dance booster, has been program director since 1996.

In 2001, he began the \$15-a-ticket series "Siteworks," which features local dancers performing new works in and around the Moshe Safdie-designed building. Since its inception, choreographers have made use of the freight elevator, the outdoor courtyard and the center's main entrance.

As part of Skirball's continuing Zeitgeist Festival, Peimer has also imported troupes such as France's Compagnie Mulleras and London-based kathak performer Akram Khan. Those concerts would have set you back \$20. But last fall, world-renowned husband-and-wife team Eiko and Koma presented the Los Angeles premiere of "Offering" -- free.

Dancers also bound through the groves of academe. Next fall, UCLA is scheduled to open the \$38-million, three-theater Gloria Kaufman Hall (formerly Dance Building 200), where, says David Rousseve, chairman of the department of world arts and cultures, tickets will range from \$5 to \$15. Until then, there are three dance concerts remaining in UCLA Live's season at Royce Hall, with tickets topping out at \$55 but good seats available for \$30.

Although David Sefton, UCLA Live's executive director, has programmed out-of-town companies, with the help of a Rockefeller grant he is scheduled to present his first local group next season. The two members of Osseus Labyrinth, Hannah Sim and Mark Steger, are known for performing both naked and upside-down. Says Sefton: "I was looking for interesting work in town, and I'd heard about them doing something in storm drains. I have no idea what they'll do yet -- I think it's a cross between Frankenstein and Willy Wonka."

Decidedly less outre is Cal State L.A.'s dance programming at its Luckman Theatre, home to Lula Washington Dance Theatre's annual Kwanzaa festival (tickets were \$25) and BalletFest, an annual summer event begun in 2000 with tickets ranging from \$30 to \$40.

Last year, it presented San Francisco-based Alonzo King's Lines Contemporary Ballet as well as Orange County-based Ballet Pacifica.

The newest, hippest kid on this block, however, is incontestably REDCAT, the CalArts-run, 270-seat, state-of-the-art theater behind Disney Hall. Executive director Murphy has programmed an exciting first season, having opened the space with dumb type, a Japanese avant-garde group. The contemporary Mexican troupe Delfos Danza Contemporanea performed last week, with tickets running \$36.

Murphy is about to inaugurate a series, "STUDIO" -- informal showings of new works and works in progress, including dance -- that will take place in February and May, with the hope that it becomes quarterly. In July, he plans to mount a festival spotlighting local performing artists, which he envisions taking place yearly.

Also woven into the REDCAT scene is Dance Camera West, a monthlong film festival launched in 2002.

Some of the festival's 200 offerings will be shown at the theater in June. At \$8 a pop, they're another way to experience dance on the cheap.

If there's a single locus series that defines affordable dance in L.A., it's Grand Performances at California Plaza's WaterCourt downtown. This summer will mark its 18th year of presenting free concerts; three or four dance companies are likely to appear.

Michael Alexander, Grand Performances' executive director, says programming dance is his way of "introducing artists and art forms to audiences who may not be ready to spend money on companies they haven't heard of."

Also this summer, \$20 will get you into the Ford Amphitheatre, where dance concerts abound. One of those dishy new Andrew Jacksons will buy a ticket to an event at the Aratani/Japan America Theatre in Little Tokyo most any time of year.

As for series, the Fountain Theatre's Forever Flamenco has been running for more than a year on Sunday nights and will set you back a mere \$25. And besides Highways, Santa Monica can boast of the Miles Memorial Playhouse, a 160-seat theater subsidized by the city.

A number of modern dance companies have performed there, with tickets running \$15. Last year, Justin Yoffe, who runs the playhouse, produced "Dance Santa Monica" with five culturally diverse troupes, an event he is preparing to mount again in April.

The bottom line?

The pulse of dance in Los Angeles is healthier than ever, a win-win situation for both audiences and performers. Brazell, Highways' erstwhile director, says: "The community

comes out and supports each other, and choreographers are finding alternative approaches of getting out their work -- which is really interesting -- for not a lot of money."

Says UCLA's Rousseve: "For dance, it is the city of the future. I think artistically, culturally, socially, L.A. is an epicenter. It's so interested in the new."

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(BEGIN TEXT OF INFOBOX)

Toeing the ticket line

Highways Performance Space

1651 18th St., Santa Monica

(310) 315-1459

A mecca for modern dance performances.

* Arianne MacBean and Stefan Fabry explore ways of moving and being moved. Friday and Saturday, 8:30 p.m. \$15.

* Ilaan Egeland and Keith Glassman plumb contemporary relationships. Feb. 5-7, 8:30 p.m. \$16.

* Trip Dance Theatre forays into the terrain of the heart. March 4-7, 8:30 p.m. \$18.

* Sri Susilowati and cohorts take on the war in Afghanistan and other issues. March 11-14, 8:30 p.m. \$16.

* Maria Gillespie delves into companionship and desire. March 25- 27, 8:30 p.m. \$16.

Ivar Theatre

1605 Ivar Ave., Hollywood

(310) 645-9419

* Spectrum Dance in L.A. presents 16 choreographers in short, high-octane works. Feb. 21, 8 p.m., Feb. 22, 7 p.m. \$16-\$20.

* New Perspectives is a high school invitational featuring dancers ages 12 to 21. March 27, 8 p.m. \$16-\$20.

Fountain Theatre

5060 Fountain Ave., Hollywood

(323) 663-1525

* In-your-face, top-flight dancing is onstage weekly in the continuing series Forever Flamenco. Sundays, 8 p.m. \$25.

* The annual Festival of Solos and Duets offers new works. April 23-25. \$20.

Electric Lodge

1416 Electric Ave., Venice

(310) 306-1854

* MAX 10 presents a stew of experimental pieces and works in progress. First Monday of every month, 7:30 p.m. \$6.

REDCAT

at Walt Disney Concert Hall

2nd and Hope streets, Los Angeles

(213) 237-2800

* STUDIO, informal showings of new works and works in progress, Feb. 22 and May 16, 8:30 p.m. \$10.

* CalArts faculty members, undergraduate choreographers and a variety of guest artists join forces for the first Spring Dance Concert, May 7-8, 8:30 p.m. \$20.

UCLA Live

Royce Hall, Westwood

(310) 825-2101

* New music, visual art and fashion collide in performances by the modern dance troupe Stephen Petronio Company. Feb. 20-21, 8 p.m. \$17-\$45.

* Humor and flamboyance infuse the boundary-pushing modern dance company Mark Morris Dance Group, Feb. 27-28, 8 p.m. \$20-\$55.

* The cutting-edge Israeli troupe Batsheva Dance Company features highlights from its last decade of modern dance works. March 19-20, 8 p.m. \$17-\$45.

Los Angeles Public Library

Mark Taper Auditorium,

5th and Flower streets, Los Angeles

(213) 228-7025

* "A Window on Movement and Language," combines dance and spoken word performed by Simone Forti, Carmela Hermann and Victoria Marks, March 4, 7 p.m. \$6-\$8.

Aratani/Japan America Theatre

244 S. San Pedro St.,

Los Angeles

* 13th annual Lester Horton Dance Awards honor the best of the local dance community, April 18, 5 p.m. (323) 687-3961. \$10-\$40.

* Cambodian ritual is explored through dance and song by Khmer Arts Academy, April 24, 8 p.m. (213) 680-3700. \$15-\$23.

Brand Library

1601 W. Mountain St., Glendale

Modern dance performances by local troupes:

* Lineage Dance Company,

May 23.

* Benita Bike's DanceArt Company, June 6.

* Regina Klenjoski Dance Company, June 27. All performances 3 p.m. Free.

[Illustration]

Caption: PHOTO: TALENT ATTRACTS TALENT: L.A. has become a magnet for choreographers and dance professionals, and the buzz is amping up. Those leading the scene are gathered at California Plaza's WaterCourt; for a key to who's who, see Page 37.; PHOTOGRAPHER: Robert Gauthier Los Angeles Times; PHOTO: FOR FANS OF DANCE: Eliza Pfister, Ken Datugan and Elizabeth Hoefner at Highways Performance

Space. "Highways is an ideal venue for new work, because it is small and intimate," says the venue's former director.; PHOTOGRAPHER: Will Taylor; PHOTO: BEYOND BOOKS: Dance and spoken word at L.A. library.; PHOTOGRAPHER: Christian Westerback; PHOTO: HER MARK: Choreographer Victoria Marks' "Against Ending," with Maria Gillespie.; PHOTOGRAPHER: Andy Mogg; PHOTO: (Cover)Times photographer Robert Gauthier catches the excitement of the dancers who are electrifying L.A.'s scene.; PHOTOGRAPHER: Robert Gauthier Los Angeles Times

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