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DISCOURSE & DIALOGUE TO UNIFY, STRENGTHEN, & AMPLIFY

JUL/AUG 2019

dancersgroup
44 Gough Street, Suite 201
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Ballet Folklórico Nube De Oro,
part of the San Francisco Ethnic
Dance Festival, Jul 6–14
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Fog Beast, Jul 18-21
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Welcome

by **MICHELLE LYNCH REYNOLDS, PROGRAM DIRECTOR**

What sort of ancestor will you be?

My ancestors laughed, cooked, suffered persecution, fell in love, escaped war, sought a better life, battled illness, upheld cultural traditions, cared for one another, and carried on despite difficult times. Can I tell you more about my ancestors during the afternoon networking break?

And, if there's time, will you share the path your ancestors took? Did they arrive by boat? Did they work the land? What language did they speak? Is it the same as yours? Where does ancestral wisdom live in your body? I hope you'll be able stay for the keynote – I hear there will be a *big reveal*.

Are you wondering what networking and keynotes have to do with ancestry? This July, Melecio Estrella and Andrew Ward – the choreographic duo behind Fog Beast – will be playing host to a conference-turned-dance-theater-experience telling stories of the tangled ancestral roots underneath the glossy facade of our high-tech Bay Area. Dancers' Group has commissioned this work and is partnering with the Asian Art Museum to bring it free to audiences. Readers can learn more about Fog Beast and their creative process in developing *The Big Reveal* in two preceding articles in the May and June issues of *In Dance*, both available at dancersgroup.org.

Ancestry – or rather, the rage and grief collected over generations, carried deep in the flesh of Native peoples, people of color, LGBTQ+ communities, and myriad structurally marginalized groups – unfolds beautifully in Sima Belmar's regular column *In Practice*, in conversation with interdisciplinary artist Chris Evans. It is writing about listening, about a performance that was a ritual for healing. My reading turned

to listening and folded in to become a part of the ritual as it continues in a new shape.

What sort of ancestor will you be?

Another way of asking could be “what will you be remembered for?” A generational view can't contain the specifics – the precise recipe, the exact pathway of the arms in a piece of choreography, the words to the lullaby, the tenor of a laugh. The memories will reside in the DNA, below and within the subconsciousness of those who carry on, and if we are lucky, some tendrils of our values will remain in the root system of an ever-expanding future.

In Dance is an integral part of Dancers' Group's own root system, holding strong to values which align with my own. Each month, we seek to uplift dance and the artists who make it, celebrate a diversity of perspectives and approaches, be curious, generous, dive deep into challenging issues, and stay playful and present in the abundant joy that dance can be. *That* is the ancestor I aim to be.

Before concluding, I want to share with you – amazing, creative, powerful reader – that this July I'm bidding farewell to my role at Dancers' Group, after seven eventful and inspiring years. I am beginning a new adventure, as Executive Director of Joe Goode Performance Group. I make this transition feeling grateful for not only the legacy of Dancers' Group and its vibrant future but for the dance ecosystem the fills my life with meaning each and every day. May we continue working together, dancing alongside each other, and deepening that root system of values for all who come along next.

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CONTENTS



ON THIS PAGE /

- Afro Urban Society: Uniting the African Diaspora through Dance**
by Aries Jordan
- 3 / Swing Dance in the Bay Area**
by Mina Rios
- 4 / In Practice: Chris Evans**
by Sima Belmar
- 6 / Jul/Aug Performance Calendar**
- 8 / Colleen Mulvihill Remembrance**
- 10 / Speak: Invaluable Lessons**
by Amy Seiwert
- 11 / Summer Reads**
by Community Submission

AFRO URBAN SOCIETY: Uniting the African Diaspora through Dance

by ARIES JORDAN

THE QUESTION ‘Where are you from?’ can mean different things depending on where you are in the world. For Nkeiruka Oruche, the Artistic Director and founder of Afro Urban Society, this once was a simple question but became more complex when she moved to the United States. Nkeiruka was born and raised in Lagos, Nigeria, grew up in New York, Georgia and came of age and found her tribe in California. Each place she has lived has shaped her identity and commitment to preserving Afro urban dance culture. Through original and curated arts and event production, popular arts education and community engagement Afro Urban Society create spaces for people of African descent all over the world to tell their own stories. In a candid interview Nkeiruka describes the essence of Afro Urban dance and community cultivated to celebrate the fullness of African identity; that spans many cultures and nations.

Aries Jordan: How have your Igbo roots shaped how you approach dance?
Nkeiruka Oruche: In Nigeria, when people ask ‘Where are you from?’ they don’t mean where you were born or raised but your ancestral homeland. I am from the Igbo ethnic group, which is one of about 250 different ethnic groups in Nigeria. Many Igbos in present-day Nigeria have a patrilineal society, which determines where you are from based on your father’s bloodline, language, and ethnic tribe. I grew up with a duality of culture that laid the foundation for how I approach dance. I understood that no matter where I was born or raised I had an ethnic identity that connected me to my Igbo ancestral homeland, language, and traditions. Amichi, Nigeria is my ancestral hometown. Growing up, I lived in Lagos (Nigeria), the Bronx, Stone Mountain (Georgia), and the Los Angeles Valley. I finally ended up in the Bay Area in 2003 for college and have been here ever since. The question of ‘Where are you from?’ grew more complicated because my identity was shaped by all of the places that I lived in. I was no longer just Igbo but so much more! A Pan African approach to dance just felt natural because it acknowledged my multinational identity and experiences.

AJ: What inspired the creation of Afro Urban Society?
NO: In New York city I experienced many types of Afro Caribbean and other Non-Nigerian African cultures. There was a collective Pan African awareness and exposure to different accents from people of African ancestry. When I moved to the south there was little diversity and I was immersed in Southern Black culture. Being African and different was really hard. Growing up in the South I felt more disconnected from other Nigerians and Africans. I wasn’t “African enough” and in the US I was “too African.” I attended college in Southern California and San Francisco and connected with other Africans, who were first-generation immigrants or had a Pan African mindset. Afro Urban Society simply began informally as a few Africans that wanted to connect and make stuff we didn’t see. At the time, Africans were creating visual aesthetics specific to their ethnic identity or tribal roots. It excluded the African diaspora that has also shaped modern day African culture. We wanted to create clothing, visual art, performances, and events that were beyond African nationalism and included political consciousness of the places that we lived. Moving to the Bay Area was encouraging; here I not only met like-minded Africans but African Americans that affirmed my multidimensional expression of Blackness. In the Bay Area, I developed my Afro Urban dance practice



which became a meeting place for all the different styles I had learned from Dancehall, Congolese music, hip hop, and contemporary African pop. Afro Urban Society became the umbrella to unify and center the creativity of people of African descent.

AJ: How do you define Afro Urban culture and dance?
NO: Afro Urban acknowledges the way people of African descent show up whether it is dance, music, fashion, or visual arts that are unique to each city or each urban locale. In America, the word “Urban” has become synonymous with African American culture. Globally urbanization describes living conditions and has a totally different meaning. Afro and Urban combined connects Black people from the African continent to the diaspora. No matter where Black people are in the world, they consciously and unconsciously have a vibe that is rooted in African culture. Urban culture naturally infuses traditional and contemporary dances. Afro Urban dances are created or fostered by people of African descent living in Urban areas like Breakdance, Turf, Pantsula, Bachata and Afrobeats.

AJ: What are the dance elements that make up an Afro Urban Dance experience?
NO: Urban Dance is usually generated from the stories, social and political conditions of urban living. In places where dance culture is strong, it is often in disenfranchised communities, where people live in close quarters

or unsheltered. Public spaces are a place to socialize, conduct business, create music or dance. From these interactions, street dance emerges and no one owns it. Each city has its own Afro Urban style but I have noticed a global thread of line dancing, freestyle, brava, and call and response. Freestyle and being yourself is important. When there is music playing, you simply dance. There are no strict guidelines, instruction or rules to follow which is rooted in African tradition. Secondly, there is also a crowd celebration of solo or partner dancers that put their unique spin on traditional or contemporary movements. Crowds gather around dancers that truly embody or elevate a dance style. Line dancing and community dancing have an important function in Afro Urban dance. Line dance is an expression of unity that brings the collective group together in movement. Lastly, the interaction between the dancer and music is essential. Traditionally, the exchange between the dancer and drummer is harmonious. Dancers moved in response to the music and vice versa. Contemporary Afro dance styles follow the same structure but traditional drummers have been replaced with DJs.

AJ: What can your audience expect from Afro Urban Society’s upcoming performance at the San Francisco Ethnic Dance festival? Also, what is Pan-Afro Urban Drumline?
NO: The audience will experience the African Diaspora through dance and music. The Pan-Afro drumline is an experimentation of urban drum culture throughout the world preserved by people of African descent. We incorporate drum styles like Junkanoo from the Bahamas, Southern Rap, Miami bass, Second line, Bay Area Hyphy, Coupé-Décalé from Côte d’Ivoire, Dancehall from Jamaica, Reggaeton from Puerto Rico and Igbo Folkloric Chant from Nigeria. That is the drumline! Our Pan-Afro Urban Drumline has partnered with UC Berkeley Bearettes dance team to pay homage to HBCU [Historically Black Colleges and Universities] band dance culture.

ARIES JORDAN is an Educator, Storyteller, and Writer. She holds an MFA in English and Creative Writing from Mills College. Her writing weaves prose, proverbs, and cultural narratives into enticing reviews, poems, blog posts, product and service descriptions that provoke thought and inner reflection. She is a proud New Yorker based in Oakland, CA. Social media: @ariesjthepoet

San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival presents: Afro Urban Society with the UC Berkeley Bearettes: Jul 6-7, Zellerbach Hall, Berkeley, sfethnicedancefestival.org or afrourbansociety.com

SWING DANCE LIVES IN THE BAY AREA

by MINA RIOS

IMPOSSIBLE TO RESIST. You know that toe-tapping, pre- World War II tune Sing, Sing, Sing that commands you to dance the moment you hear it? That was the point of the catchy jazz arrangement by Louis Prima, famously performed by Benny Goodman and his orchestra – to get listeners up on their feet. Swing music worked its magic back then – as it does today, conjuring up an intoxicating social dance experience. Jazz music of this kind, treasured by countless people over multiple generations, will never be forgotten. Enthusiasts wouldn’t allow it. For this reason, swing music and dance live on – as it must – in the San Francisco Bay Area and around the globe.

Today, you could say swing has a somewhat underground existence. You’re less likely to see swing events publicized widely through paid advertising outlets. Underground as it may seem, swing communities are far reaching in both rural and urban areas worldwide. Enthusiasts are savvy to knowing precisely where to find the latest happenings in their area; usually online through social media, specific websites, and word of mouth.

Just as important as it is to learn the steps to the various swing dance styles, knowing the basic history of swing and learning about what led to swing’s revival in the 1980s and 90s, is equally essential information for any newcomer to the scene.

Swing emerged in Harlem, New York during the depression and made its mark at the Savoy Ballroom – America’s first swing club showcasing American jazz dance, now known as swing. The first official swing dance, the Lindy Hop, a partner dance driven by African rhythms with dance influences from the Charleston and tap, became an international sensation when legendary Savoy dancer Frankie Manning added aerial dance moves to the Lindy, inspiring a multitude of other swing styles, i.e. the Balboa, Shag, and others – all the way through the end of World War II.

The swing resurgence of the 1980s and 90s was a pop culture phenomenon. Following the popularity of the 1980 movie, *The Blues Brothers*, featuring the big band sound of Cab Calloway, and the colossal response to rockabilly music by *The Stray Cats*, dancers from Sweden and Pasadena, California went on a mission to track down some of the original 1930s/40s swing dancers. Frankie Manning and other notable dancers such as Al Minns agreed to teach an eager generation of dancers the Lindy Hop and other swing dance styles. Classes and workshops led by the legendary dancers were held worldwide, expanding the new generation of swing dancers globally, and prompting the first ever Swing Dance Camp – held in Her-räng, Sweden – becoming one of the foremost swing dance events on the global radar to date.

Music influences during the 80s and 90s swing revival included the Royal Crown Revue, the Squirrel Nut Zippers, the Brian Setzer Orchestra, and the Cherry Poppin’ Daddy’s. Movies such as *A League of Their Own* and *Swingers* also played a significant role during the swing comeback; as did the 1998 Gap commercial *Khakis Swing* – featuring Lindy Hop dance to Louis Prima’s “Jump, Jive an’ Wail.”

Often, when we think of swing dancing, high energy lifts and swift aerial dance steps come to mind. Finding this kind of spectator entertainment is fairly uncommon these days; but Stanford Swingtime in Palo Alto – Stanford University’s premiere performance-based swing dance troupe, comprised of Stanford undergraduates and graduate students, has created such an outlet.



Jean Baptiste Ruffio and Bonnie Nortz / photo by Paul Csonka



Lindy in the Park / photo by Jeremy Cooper

Founded in 2002 – the troupe, funded by Stanford University, holds regular auditions – open to Stanford students only with no prior dance experience. While the qualifications are lenient, a hint of verve does go a long way; “Swingtime members are chosen for attitude as much as aptitude,” as it states on the Swingtime audition web page.

Maya Lee Ziv, Digital Media & Alumni Relations Chair for Stanford Swingtime shares, “Some dancers have turned professional. A few Swingtime alums have gone on to compete at Camp Hollywood and other swing events. Paul Csonka, who was Swingtime’s Artistic Director for a few years, is out there making us proud with Audrey Ho, who ran the Stanford Lindy Project for a while.”

Members of Swingtime also host quarterly Stanford Swing Dancers (SSD) events (formerly the Stanford Lindy Project), which are free and open to the public. Current president of Stanford Swingtime, Alexandra Bernard, teaches many of the SSD workshops held weekly at White Plaza on the Stanford campus.

HERE'S A FEW SWING DANCE RESOURCES

Cats Corner
For Dancers Only
LindyCircle.com
Lindy in the Park
Northern California Lindy Society
Stanford Swingtime
The Bootleggers Ball
The Breakaway
The Dancers Den
The 9:20 Special
The Woodchopper’s Ball
Wednesday Night Hop

If there’s one swing event in the Bay Area that’s a definite must, particularly for the absolute beginner, it’s San Francisco’s world-famous Lindy in the Park.

If you’re attending one of Stanford’s quarterly social dance events, such as the annual Big Dance held in the Spring or the Fall Ball, live swing music is a typical standard. Among the favorite featured bands is the Don Neely Swingtet.

SSD events also encourage the following Partner Dance Roles: (1) Don’t assume someone leads or follows based on gender presentation. You can invite someone to dance by asking “Would you like to lead me/follow me in this song?” If you plan to switch roles within a single dance, clear it with your partner first. (2) Wear ribbons (when available) to indicate a willingness to lead or follow or both that night; it will make finding a partner more efficient.

If there’s one swing event in the Bay Area that’s a definite must, particularly for the absolute beginner, it’s San Francisco’s world-famous Lindy in the Park. Every Sunday from 11am – 2pm in Golden Gate Park (weather permitting), 100-200 seasoned and aspiring lindy hoppers head to San Francisco’s best known, free, outdoor swing hub. From weekly regulars to first time goers, an ethnically diverse crowd of individuals predominantly attend, ranging in age from young adult to seniors in their 80s.

Head instructor Hep Jen and head organizer, co-founder/swing dance instructor Ken Watanabe spearheaded the event back in August 1996, offering a free beginner lesson to help grow the recurring event.

Following college, Watanabe began swing lessons through a Park & Recreation class in Palo Alto and received further training in West Coast Swing, Jitterbug, and Lindy Hop in San Francisco.

Looking back 23 years, during Lindy in the Park’s early beginning, Watanabe says, “At that time, there were only around 30 people actively dancing Lindy Hop and we were all connected via email. One of us knew about the bandshell in Golden Gate Park and thought it would be fun to dance there. For several months, we would talk about it, but never get around to it. Eventually, my friend, Chad Kubo, and I decided to organize an outing to the bandshell, so I emailed everyone on the list. I showed up early to sweep the bandshell, and Chad brought his boombox. To our amazement, the electrical outlets at the bandshell worked! Thirteen people showed up, and we had so much fun that we had 3 more that Summer and Fall. In the Spring of 1997, we decided to make it a regularly weekly event. At the same time, swing dancing became cool again, and as the fad grew, more people were getting into the swing dancing and vintage fashion, more retro swing bands were forming, and more clubs were featuring swing bands and classes. It was kind of like the perfect storm. Word spread and Lindy in the Park grew quickly in size, and the rest is history.”

If night-time swing dance socials with live music and martinis are your thing, there’s some swank venues around town worth checking out.

By night, Watanabe is a swing event producer for the weekly Woodchopper’s Ball in San Francisco, offering live music and dancing every Tuesday night at the historic Verdi Club - a newly renovated 2,500 square-foot ballroom and lounge with a full bar.

What makes attending swing events at the Verdi Club so special? Watanabe explains, “It features the largest variety of live swing dance music in San Francisco. We have a different band each week. So far, we’ve had over 40 bands.”

Regular bands include Clint Baker, Johnny Bones and The Palace of Jazz, the Hot Baked Goods, the Oaktown Strutters, the Cotton-tails, the Alpha Rhythm Kings, Jellyroll, the Silver Bell Jazz Band, Lisa Gonick & the Damfino Players, the Fil Lorenz Orchestra, Laura Lackey’s Rhythm Revue, Sam Rocha and his Cool Friends, the B-Stars, Rob Reich Swings Left, and Nirav Sanghani and the Pacific Six.

There’s no denying that the Bay Area swing scene has no short supply of live music. That’s one sure way to pick a choice venue for learning swing and becoming a regular; follow the live music. Whether you’re partial to live music or learning how to Lindy in the Park, there’s an abundance of events happening daily in these parts. Get on board now and watch the scene as it grows. Before long, someone will produce another hit film, song, or album that will send people into another burning frenzy, initiating an insatiable desire to learn how to Boogie Woogie. Wait and see.

Originally from San Francisco, Mina Rios is a freelance journalist and voice for the global arts community through stimulating, under-reported journalism. Driven by her background in music, dance, drama, and a passion for the arts, Rios writes for a variety of California based publications including: *In Dance*, *Sonoma Magazine*, *North Bay Bohemian*, *Pacific Sun*, and *The San Diego Reader*. Rios also offers writing services in ad copy, press releases, business proposals, and grant acquisitions through her consulting business Mina Communications.

IN PRACTICE: Reconstructing Reconstruction with Chris Evans

by SIMA BELMAR

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO GRIEVE in the context of perpetual marginalization and terrorization? What are the contours of grief in the afterlife of ancestral, epigenetic, and intergenerational trauma? And what if what is grieving is the earth itself? What if there’s no way to move on?

Chris Evans’ collaborative, multidisciplinary, multimedia event *Reconstructions Performance Ritual* is divided into four parts: a gallery installation performance in three cycles (Cycle 1: Find Me, Cycle 2: Grief, Cycle 3: Rage); a staged performance (This Must Break); a procession through Oakland’s Idora Park/Rancho San Antonio/Ohlone Land neighborhood; and a shared meal curated by Thuy Tran. The installation, staged performance, and meal took place over two weekends in March at the Idora Park Project Space at the corner of Shattuck and 56th Street, a former French laundry built in 1934.

In the gallery, grief, rather than a unidirectional and finite process, is a cycle that repeats. And rage, rather than operating as a necessary step on the path towards moving on from grief, is the core affect around which the project circles. *Reconstructions Performance Ritual* is the final installment of the *Reconstruction Study Project* that Evans began in collaboration with Broun Fellinis saxophonist/keyboardist/vocalist David Boyce in 2015. Each study is an investigation into the affective afterlife of the post-Civil War Reconstruction era in the US. Throughout the work, Evans, dancer/choreographer Byb Bibene, and Boyce embody historical, biblical, and composite characters to explore the question, “What is the liberatory potential of rage?” Evans writes, “The project begins with the premise that we in America are born, in the words of Lillian Smith, onto a ‘Trembling Earth,’ a trembling that began with the first violence done to the First Peoples.”

Idora Park Project Space is the home of choreographer/dancer/director/cellist Evans and her partner in life and art, installation artist/sculptor/exhibitions designer Ernest Jolly. The couple worked on *Reconstructions Performance Ritual* with Bibene, Boyce, costume designer/vintage clothing store owner/one-woman-show-wonder Regina Evans, lighting designer/visual and performing artist Stephanie Anne Johnson, dancer/choreographer Latanya D. Tigner, and co-producer curator/artist Rhiannon Evans MacFadyen. The number of backslashes alone attests to the range of experiences, interests, and talents that went into the construction of Reconstructions.

I attended the penultimate performance ritual on March 30. What follows is a reconstruction of my trembling conversation with



Photos by Sibila Savage



Evans at Idora Park Project Space, in her living room, which had only recently been the site of the staged performance and shared meal segments of the ritual. Evans and I have talked a lot about her process and her ideas over the past few years so there will be under-explicated assumptions throughout our discourse. I hope you will allow yourself to float in the lazy river of our talk and worry not about extracting anything solid from its silty bed.

• • • • •

Sima Belmar: Why does rage follow grief in this work?

Chris Evans: David and Byb have a duet about grief, black men’s grief specifically, the loss of and assault on intimacy and connection. After we finished the shows and in the process of coming back to life, it felt like the earth was grieving, and I didn’t know what to do with that. I think of rage as having this transformative power, particularly the Jim Coble story¹, which was one of the first inspirations for the piece. Through his rage he transformed his life. How does rage get channeled into transformation? But I think the grief has to happen first because there’s so much trapped energy in people and then the rage can get expressed.

SB: What you’re saying makes me think that moving from anger to grief to acceptance is a privileged order of emotional life. Like maybe you’re angry at your mother or your boss and that anger is getting in the way of feeling the grief over what you didn’t get that you needed in life. This suggests that the playing field is even and it is an individual process of internalizing pain that can eventu-

ally give way to acceptance and forgiveness of self and others. But if you are a victim of systemic, structural violence that separates and hierarchizes humanities, then I can see that you’re always already living grieving, and then something has to give for you to feel the injustice, which is radically different.

CE: That direction of anger to grief is a bit of a masculine construct and potentially a western European white construct. For people who are not allowed to express anger, that anger gets buried under grief, and people who are not allowed to express anger are not allowed to be fully human members of a community. The only emotion available for them/us to express is grief or sadness or depression, because if you express anger you’d be killed. I’m interested in how to let that grief move through to find that righteous anger.

SB: How do you feel about what happened in the work that you made? What you were hoping to make visible, palpable?

CE: I feel like this kind of ritual work that I did with this piece, that people like Amara [Tabor-Smith] and Ellen [Sebastian Chang] do, like Dohee [Lee] does, is happening in different places, and it’s as if we’re creating these pools of water that are starting to join. I feel almost funny saying I created this work because it came to me, like I was told, ok, this is your part to do to join the work of these other artists, who have influenced me and been such an important part of my growth as an artist. And the people I collaborated with on every aspect were so much a part of making it realize itself. I think this ritual work is also so much about healing participants. The audiences for this work are diverse and often

predominantly people of color. There’s something about this self-healing that is happening within communities that have been traumatized and marginalized.

I asked everyone who worked on the piece what kinds of things they did in order to process, what were their own personal rituals, and Latanya said something that made a lot of sense to me. She said, “I’m never out of it.” So it’s not really a question of processing it and then it being done. The couple nights after the show I couldn’t sleep because I felt like the earth was so sad and weighted upon. [Tears.] It’s such a huge question. There’s nothing I can do to solve that. But I can be in my work about it, around it.

SB: You and I have talked a lot about what it means to listen. I consider myself a good listener but I’m often (always?) responding to what I’m hearing in my head, which doesn’t feel like good listening to me.

CE: We talk so much about listening and there’s so little listening that actually happens. For the staged performance, when you walk in you’re hearing a story told in a language that most people wouldn’t recognize. It was the Ohlone language Chochenyo, the first language spoken on these lands by human beings. There was a night when people were buzzing with questions about the language, all of this talking. I didn’t want you to necessarily understand it. I wanted its meaning to come into your body. I wanted you to be in a state of not knowing and still allow something to come in. So at the last performance, Rhiannon read something I wrote about listening to the audience—that this is an opportunity to listen and let the unknown come into your body through your pores, through your ears, without you trying to capture it in words. I hope people had some experience of that because I think it’s key for anything to change.

SB: You asked me to do some writing about this work. What does a writing that’s a listening look like? Why write about a ritual performance? What does the writing serve?

CE: Part of it is practical, to have the documentation. Part of it is I have felt fairly invisible as an artist and being made visible. Most of my collaborators are not as visible as they should be. They are super talented, accomplished people who don’t get enough support for what they do. And you’re who I wanted to write about it because I’ve talked to you a lot about this, I know you’re going to be aware of racial dynamics, you’re thinking about history, you’re thinking about the embedded racism that is throughout so many of our artistic structures and institutions. And I was also curious to see what you would do. Your writing is a continuation of the work in a different form.

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I’ve been trying to practice listening in making this project. Not just listening to people—listening to place, the non-material world, the past, things we may not see or that do not fit into our rational understanding of a thing to be listened to. So in order to make this piece I had to keep trusting and keep listening. This didn’t come from inside me. This came from somewhere else and I listened. That allowed me to see and hear and create things that I couldn’t have done without that. I have this image of you writing and you doing that sort of meditation and that sort of listening and seeing what comes and trusting that.

SB: Ok. I want to be fiercely honest. I feel bereft because I wasn’t really present enough for your show. [*Tears.*] It was really shitty timing for me. I wasn’t even supposed to be here. I was supposed to be in New York but I had to cancel the trip. It was such a low point and then I missed the gallery section and I’m angry at myself for that. I feel like I let you down. Like I betrayed something. Like I was supposed to show up in a certain way and I didn’t. So I was already having trouble connecting to the performance because of my own shit, which, truth be told, happens at almost every performance until I have a chance to arrive, settle in, await the moment that pulls me into feeling, into an experience. While I wait, I watch the dancing, the technique, the patterns. I get into design thinking. I start to ask questions about the work and make connections. I begin to think about how I’d write about what I’m witnessing. When I entered this space, I thought, Why aren’t we in a circle? (I was making assumptions about rituals

“...listen and let the unknown come into your body through your pores, through your ears, without you trying to capture it in words.” —CHRIS EVANS

needing to transpire in circles.) Then you invited audience members onto the stage. I loved watching them watch us as we listened to the unbearable litany of numbers, dollar amounts and ages from the auction block. It went on for a long time and the air became thick with grief and rage, but also with more minor affects like discomfort and irritation. Then, the minute you began playing the cello, I felt physically moved by its sound and by where you go facially while you’re playing. I felt like I was being rolled around viscerally. That was when I stopped resisting the work and ceased to feel like I’d fucked it up by the time I got there. You mentioned water earlier. I felt the performance to be a container rather than the water itself, a vessel for the flow of grief and rage. I felt like I was being held by the performance for my own nonsense, which may have nothing to do with what was motivating this work. I think I’m telling you that I wanted to rise to what you made because of how I know you. [*Full crying now.*] I felt a certain responsibility to the work.

CE: When you said that you felt like you were in a container and you were having all of these feelings—that’s ritual. It’s not performance. That was my goal. I want people to feel and I want it to be a place of healing. I think that’s my work in this world, to help all of us heal in different ways. You had a whole journey and I think that’s amazing. You’re saying you weren’t present but you really were.

SB: Like Clementine! She’s a character in a children’s book series, who is always getting in trouble for not paying attention at school. But she always asserts, “But I was paying attention!”—just not to the lesson, rather, to the sky outside or a classmate’s pigtails. Tell me a bit about what you were paying attention to while performing in the work?

CE: In the gallery we were excavating. Here, in this artificial, theatrical space, it was about reconstructing. I became a different person in here. I felt my fierceness and my authority. I wasn’t just excavating and listening and having things channel through my body. I was full with that and I had something to say. It was very different. I felt my own rage in here.

SB: Fierce is how I felt your presence here.

CE: The archetype I was embodying was about in-between-ness and invisibility and the deep feminine. To stand up and be seen and heard unapologetically was a powerful experience in front of an audience. It was me and not me. I felt like I became an ancestor spirit that was saying, You need to hear me. I was Dorcas, a biblical character, a seamstress, who had a group of widows who were her disciples, I think. In the story she dies and St. Peter raises her from the dead. I read that story as this transition from matriarchal to patriarchal religions and that being risen from the dead was not a good thing but rather an appropriating thing, where she becomes a symbol of the power of patriarchal, monotheistic religion—a violence.

• • • • •

Though the interview drops off here, Chris and I continued talking over rice cakes and hummus in her living room that had been the theater space, that had been the ritual space, that continues to be a space that welcomes ghosts to help heal us all.

1. “ [...] a story passed down to David from his great uncle about a family relative named Jim Coble. Sometime around 1910 in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma Jim Coble killed 10 white people in the town’s general store. Eluding the inevitable pWosse that ended for so many in lynching, Coble and his family escaped to Mexico where David still has relatives” (reconstructionstudy.net).

SIMA BELMAR, Ph.D., is a Lecturer in the Department of Theater, Dance, & Performance Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. Her writing has appeared in *The Brooklyn Rail*, *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, *The Oakland Tribune*, *Dance Magazine*, *TDR*, *Journal of Dance & Somatic Practices*, *Performance Matters*, *Contemporary Theatre Review*, and *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*. Her writing on living in Naples can be found at undertheneapolitanson.blogspot.com. To keep up with Sima’s writing please subscribe to tinyletter.com/simabelmar.

community news

Dancers’ Group Announces Spring 2019 CA\$H Awards

CA\$H are bi-annual awards supporting Bay Area dance artists and organizations. \$42,000 in grants are being awarded to seven individual artists and seven dance organizations in support of artistic projects—each grant award is \$3,000. CA\$H supports artists from diverse cultural backgrounds and creative practices. Projects supported this round feature Hula, Bharatanatyam, performance ritual, Persian, contemporary, Cuban folkloric, and dance works focused on the experiences of artists of color.

The CA\$H program, which has been supporting dance-makers for the past 19 years, is funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and Grants for the Arts.

The 14 Spring 2019 Dance grantees are:

Individual Artists

Susana Arenas
Surabhi Bharadwaj
Cherie Hill
Irene Hsi
randy reyes
Liv Schaffer
Keisha Turner

Organizations

jFLACC! Festival of Latin American Contemporary Choreographers
Halau o Keikiali’i
inkBoat
Lenora Lee Dance
NAKA Dance Theater
Sense Object
Shahrzad Dance Academy
dancersgroup.org/cash

Rainin Foundation Awards Arts Grants

Grants will support arts organizations in San Francisco, Oakland and Berkeley and collaborations designed to help artists thrive.

AXIS Dance Company (\$21,000) for Alice, which explores the intersections between people with disabilities and the homeless community through the story of Alice in Wonderland.

Constance Hockaday (\$30,000) for Old Man, Dance, an immersive performance on the USS Potomac which seeks to deconstruct the white male body’s expression of power and challenge its role in American democracy.

Counterpulse (\$21,000) for Weaving Many Spirits: Two-Spirit Native American Artist Commissioning, a performance festival seeking to decolonize gender through Indigenous performance.

Dance Elixir (\$25,000) for Noise & Nation, a new choreography by Leyya Mona Tawil in collaboration with artists will be featured as part of the Arab.AMP festival, which focuses on experimental live art from the Arab diaspora, celebrates the plurality of Arab voices, and challenges identity legibility.

Eastside Arts Alliance (\$30,000) for LIVE ARTS IN RESISTANCE (LAIR), a program that fosters risk-taking, rigor and radical critique on the role of political activism, cultural work and art in society.

Eye Zen Presents (\$30,000) for OUT of Site: SOMA, a new site-responsive, immersive LGBTQ+ walking tour. OUT of Site: SOMA will focus on San Francisco’s South of Market (SOMA) neighborhood, celebrating its new status as the first LGBTQ+ and Leather Cultural District.

Flyaway Productions (\$22,000) for MEET US QUICKLY WITH YOUR MERCY: Part 2 of The Decarceration Trilogy (MERCY), the second piece in a trilogy of performances exploring the effects of prison on American citizens.

Fresh Meat Productions (\$21,000) for The Lost Art of Dreaming, Sean Dorsey Dance’s new full-length work, which investigates what is possible when trans, gender non-conforming, and queer communities are encouraged to think expansively and optimistically about their futures, at a time when threats to these communities have escalated.

Fua Dia Congo (\$20,000) for Lufuki: The Origins of Funk, a new site-specific dance creation rooted in a dialogue in dance between traditional Congolese movement, Afro Urban dance styles, and Hip Hop.

Jess Curtis/Gravity Inc. (\$22,000) for (in)Visible, a new experimental performance piece grounded in research of the intersections of movement, culture, sensory difference, and physical diversity in live performance.

Nava Dance Theatre (\$15,000) for Tea with Demons, an immersive multimedia bharatanatyam dance production which explores increasing income disparities within the local South Asian community.

The Dance Brigade (\$30,000) for Comhar, a festival featuring unique collaborations between artists, healers, scientists, and community.
krfoundation.org

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JUL/AUG 2019

calendar

VISIT THE ONLINE COMMUNITY CALENDAR, to find additional events and to submit a performance. dancersgroup.org

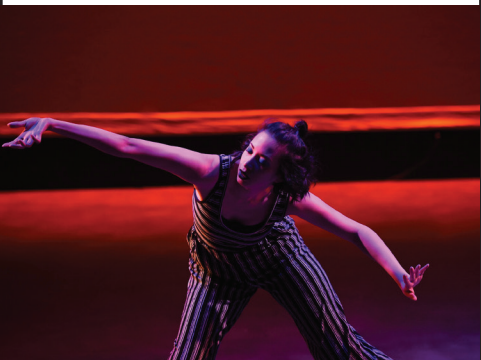


Garrett+Moulton, Aug 9-11 / Photo by RJ Muna

SF Ethnic Dance Festival: Weekend 1

Zellerbach Hall, Berkeley

Featuring 15 Bay Area dance and music ensembles showcasing traditions from around the world: Afro Urban Society + Bearettes, Chitresh Das Institute, Gâta Bantu, Jubilee American Dance Theatre, Kanyon Sayers-Roods, Kiazi Malonga, Kohaku + Shiho Tendou, L'Emir Hassan Harfouche + Georges Lammam Ensemble, Los Lupeños de San José, Nicole Maria + Georges Lammam Ensemble, O D K, and SF Taiko Dojo. Sat-Sun, Jul 6 & 7, 3pm, \$14-68. sfethnicedancefestival.org



Christina Carter, Aug 2-3 / Photo by Andy Barron

Carolina Lugo's & Carolé Acuña's Ballet Flamenco

Peña Pachamama, SF

A mother & daughter duo, Carolina's y Carolé's, high energy and passion defines a new dimension in Spanish dance traditions. Saturdays, Jul 6-Aug 31, 7pm, \$22.

pachamamacenter.org

HEARTLAND: Woodland Creatures

Shawl-Anderson Dance Center, Berkeley

A pop-up event from Salt Lake City choreographer Molly Heller and composer Michael Wall, *HEARTLAND* is a dance party within a DANCE PARTY in which multiple performances happen amidst moving and grooving. Sat, Jul 13, 8pm, \$15-20.

shawl-anderson.org

Yerba Buena Gardens ChoreoFest

Yerba Buena Gardens, SF

Curated by RAWdance's Artistic Directors, the

third annual ChoreoFest features nine local companies in a weekend of extraordinary performances throughout the Gardens' lawns and architecture. Sat-Sun, Jul 13 & 14, 1pm, **FREE**.

ybgfestival.org

SF Ethnic Dance Festival: Weekend 2

Zellerbach Hall, Berkeley

Performances by 13 Bay Area dance and music ensembles showcasing traditions from around the world, including: Awon Ohun Omnira (Voices of Freedom), Ballet Folklórico Nube de Oro, Cunamacué, Diamano Coura West African Dance Company, Feng Ye Dance Studio, Guru Shradha + Antara Asthaayi Dance + Navia Dance Academy, Jackeline Rago, Parangal Dance Company, Tara Catherine Pandeya, and Te Mana O Te Ra. Sat-Sun, Jul 13 & 14, 3pm \$14-68. sfethnicedancefestival.org

Amy Seiwert's Imagery

ODC Theater, SF

SKETCH 9 : Perspective features original works by Artistic Director Amy Seiwert, Artistic Fellow Ben Needham-Wood, and Chicago based

choreographer Stephanie Martinez (winner of the Joffrey Ballet's "Winning Works: Choreographers of Color" commission). Wed-Sat, Jul 17-20, 8pm, \$25-55.

asimagery.org

Fog Beast

Asian Art Museum, SF

Melecio Estrella and Andrew Ward of Fog Beast use body-based theatrics in *The Big Reveal*, a subversive art experience with dancing, humor and live music. Presented in the format of a corporate conference turned dance theater experience, this interactive performance draws on family histories and immigration stories to consider access and belonging, revealing what lies beneath modern corporate America. As an audience member, you will move through the museum, orienting and reorienting yourself in "networking" sessions and in-depth breakout groups, culminating in a full-throttle keynote address. Co-presented by Dancers' Group and The Asian Art Museum. Thu, Jul 18, 6-8:30pm; Sat-Sun, Jul 20-21, 10:30am-4:30pm, **FREE**. fogbeast.com

IncivilitySF

EXIT Theatre, SF

Subversion invites artists working with themes of social justice, community-empowerment, and political awakening to come try out new work/work-in-progress in front of a live audience. Each evening will have four featured performers, plus an optional facilitated feedback session afterwards for those seeking input on their creations. Fri Jul 26, 8pm, **FREE**.

theexit.org

Genevieve Rochefor and Mel Mark

SAFEhouse Arts, SF

Genevieve Rochefort's new work explores partnerwork and use of the gaze. Mel Mark examines games and play in "No one can play *this* game alone." Presented by SAFEhouse's Resident Artists Workshop. Fri-Sat, Jul 26-27, 8pm, \$15-20.

safehousearts.org

ODC/Dance

ODC Theater, SF

This year Summer Sampler features two unique programs over two back-to-back weeks. ODC's Artistic Directors and Choreographers (Brenda Way, KT Nelson, Kate Weare



Junji Dezaki and Norma Ann Taitano Phillips, part of SpectorDance Choreographers Showcase, Aug 3-4 /Photo by Michael Higgins



Mel Mark, Jul 26-27 / Photo by Eric Allen

and Kimi Okada) collaborate and cross-pollinate on a new work exploring survival and escape during trying times over the first weekend. The second weekend features works by Brenda Way. Fri-Sat, Jul 26-27 & Aug 2-3, 8pm, \$30.
[odc.dance](#)

NewGround Dance Company

Canada College Theater, Redwood City

Star Seed, a poetic weave of dance, voice, and imagery focusing on 3 powerful seeds that live inside each of us. When these 3 seeds are planted in the human heart, a new humanity is born. Sat, Jul 27 & Aug 3, 7pm, \$25.
[newgrounddance.com](#)

Christina Carter, Es “Delight” Co, and Connolly Strombeck

SAFEhouse Arts, SF
Christina Carter explores the work and pleasure of activism in her new solo. Es “Delight” Co is directed by Esra Coskun and presents a new dance work examining loss. Connolly Strombeck is also presenting new work on this program. Presented by SAFEhouse’s Resident Artist Workshop. Fri-Sat, Aug 2-3, 8pm, \$15-20.
[safehousearts.org](#)

SpectorDance
SpectorDance, Marina

The Choreographers Showcase offers local audiences a chance to see a wide variety of original, cutting-edge works from dance artists from around the country, celebrating the diversity and vitality of dance as a contemporary art form today. Sat, Aug 3, 7:30pm; Sun, Aug 4, 2pm, see website for ticket information.
[spectordance.org](#)

bananarama and Octavia Rose Hingle

SAFEhouse Arts, SF
Performing arts collective bananarama (Clarissa Dyas, Kassidy Friend, Nicole Maimon, and Manuel Mendoza) present a new work that studies the obsession with genitalia as a predetermination of gender, the inherent voyeurism of a present audience, and the masculine/feminine energy dynamic. Octavia Rose Hingle imagines the future when ocean tides have seized the land at the water’s edge and the Bay Area, as we know it, is underwater in their new performance work *The Gills Beneath Our Flesh*. Presented by SAFEhouse’s Resident Artist Workshop. Fri-Sat, Aug 9-10, 8pm, \$15-20.
[safehousearts.org](#)

Garrett + Moulton Productions

YBCA Theater, SF
Four Acts of Light and Wonder features two world premieres and a US premiere set to original music and the reprise of a popular work set to Mozart. Janice Garrett presents *The Over-Soul* and Moulton’s newest iteration of his crowd favorite *Ball Passing*, the US premiere of Garrett’s *Gojubi* and the reprise of *The Mozart* (2017) all with live music. Fri-Sat, Aug 9-10, 8pm; Sun, Aug 11, 3pm, \$25-42.
[garrettmoulton.org](#)

International Deaf Dance Festival

Dance Mission Theater, SF
Produced by Urban Jazz Dance company, the annual event consists of performances and workshops that highlight the important contributions that Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HoH) artists make to our community. This year they have many local Deaf artists, some flying in from India, Colombia, Taiwan, Jamaica, Mexico, Washington DC, Arkansas and more. There will be a diversity of Sign Languages including but not limited to Colombian Sign Language, American Sign Language, International Sign Language and Russian Sign Language. Fri-Sat, Aug 9-10, 7:30pm; Sun, Aug 11, 2pm, \$12-30.
[realurbanjazzdance.com](#)



Parangal Dance Company, part of the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival, Jul 6-14 / Photo by RJ Muna



Kathy Mata Ballet, Aug 24 / Photo by Jennifer V. Zee

Dalton Alexander
Studio 210, SF

#Whitenoise strives to collide nostalgia for the past with current American affairs. Fri-Sat, Aug 9-10, 16-17, & 23-24; 8pm; Sun-Mon, Aug 11-12, 7pm; Sun, Aug 18 & 25, 7pm.
[dalexandermoves.space](#)

Francesca Cipponeri and Gwendoline Hornig

SAFEhouse Arts, SF
Francesca Cipponeri’s new work is the embodiment of redemption and ransom; an opportunity

to witness the cycle of decay and creation through the movement language of dance. Gwendoline Hornig and collaborators explore women’s bodies, voices and agency throughout history in their new work. Presented by SAFEhouse’s Resident Artist Workshop. Fri-Sat, Aug 16-17, 8pm, \$15-20.
[safehousearts.org](#)

Megan Lowe Dances
Athletic Playground, Emeryville

Action Potential is a site-specific dynamic dance and live music adventure by Megan Lowe Dances. Audiences will be led through space, with dancers interacting with ladders, planks, bars, mats, blocks, aerial apparatus, walls, and each other. Sat, Aug 17 & 24, 6 & 8pm; Sun, Aug 18 & 25, 7pm, \$20-30.
[actionpotential.eventbrite.com](#)

ayanadancearts
SAFEhouse Arts, SF

Two works will be presented that look at transformation and nurturing. Fri, Aug 23, 8pm, \$15-20.
[safehousearts.org](#)

Kathy Mata Ballet
Mercy High School, SF

The program will present classical and contemporary ballet pieces performed with live accompaniment, as well as numbers incorporating many different dance styles, including modern, lyrical fusion, contemporary, musical theater, character, and much more. Sat, Aug 24, 7pm, **FREE**.
[kathymataballet.org](#)



Guru Shradha, part of the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival, Jul 6-14/ Photo by RJ Muna

COLLEEN MULVIHILL: June 9, 1952 – March 2, 2019

AFTER A BRIEF, SUDDEN ILLNESS, long time Bay Area resident dance artist Colleen Mulvihill died in Longmont, Colorado on March 2, 2019. Her partner for close to four decades, J.A Deane (Dino,) was there to support her passing and reflected that “I was blessed to have shared a life-journey with this amazing woman for 38 years and as we all (family/friends/colleagues/clients) knew, Colleen walked her own path. I often felt that she wasn’t securely attached to this physical world but rather traveled another strata.”

A movement conjurer whose 30 year dance career emerged from her early years as an Olympic gymnast, Colleen transformed her singular artistic perspective into healing work with others, using movement and energy work to “understand the deeper energetic capacities within us to affect change and improvement in our whole state of being.” This work bridged diverse settings and body-work modalities, each reflecting her history as a gymnast, dancer, choreographer, teacher, coach and especially in her role as a cherished friend to many in the dance world.

One of eight siblings, Colleen Mulvihill found her calling at an early age, spending hours in the gym daily being coached by her father, Dick Mulvihill, a well-known gymnastic coach in the United States in the 1960s. Colleen went on to compete at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics by placing third at the Olympic Trials. After the Olympics she completed her education at Centennial High School in Illinois, graduating in 1970 and then attended the University of Illinois where she studied dance with Beverly Blossom, Chester Wollenski, Willis Ward and Pat Knowles, receiving a BFA in Modern Dance in 1974.

As might be assumed from her gymnastic training, Colleen was an exceptional dancer.



Colleen Mulvihill /
Photo courtesy of J.A. Deane

In the Bay Area, Colleen collaborated with the Margaret Jenkins Dance Company from 1975–1979 and also from 1984-1986. On learning of her death Jenkins provided this reflection, “Colleen was the definition of rhythm for me, living in the spaces in between the beats. When she first came to my class I wondered who this creature was, fresh from gymnastics and the university fitting no particular definition of dancer thank goodness, but surely challenging how one might learn from and contribute to what she knew. Sometimes one just takes a chance not knowing why, as so many did with me, and she became a gift that kept revealing the work to me, to us - her spirit demanding, her craft exemplary, her love in every step, in the margins or ON the stage. A blessing to the work, to me, ongoing.”

Colleen also had the opportunity to work with the David Gordon Pick Up Company in

New York City from 1980 to 81.

Starting in 1979, Colleen started her longest and most endearing collaboration that continued until her death. That collaborative partner was composer and musician J.A. Deane - Dino. Together they generated over 50 dance and music works which they described as “a dynamic relationship to the inexhaustible possibilities of movement, sound, architecture, image and light.” Colleen and Dino performed and presented original productions throughout the United States, Europe and China. In 1986 Dancers’ Group presented Colleen and Dino’s work in the inaugural Edge Festival and again in 1994, both presentations in San Francisco.

Over the years Colleen created several businesses that allowed her to share her unique perspectives on training that, in addition to gymnastics and dance included, Qi

Kung, yoga, Pilates and Gyrotonic. For many years she created gymnastics routines for competitive university and club teams, cultivating award-winning gymnasts throughout the country, including the University of California, Berkeley Golden Bears. Over the course of her 20-year study of Five Element Theory, Reiki and other esoteric healing forms, she created a tremendously effective and wholly unique energetic healing modality, which she used to restore health to countless animals and people.

Her most recent business in Colorado was aptly titled “The Body Speaks.” On the Body Speaks website Colleen described how she approached each person, " I have come to understand the deeper energetic capacities within us; allowing us to sense new territories of our beings (not only our physical bodies) and then use this awareness to affect change and improvement in our whole state of being. This deeper participation with our whole beings gives us an ever evolving means to express ourselves, communicating with clarity and ease. Constantly attuning to this whole body awareness is what I imagine to be the essence of living from our "Core".” She generously brought to each setting a warmth that radiated kindness imbued with respect for each individual body and being. When you worked with Colleen you were assured one of her vibrant smiles that was always followed by her soulful laugh.

Colleen’s life was celebrated on June 2nd with colleagues, friends and clients in Colorado and on her birthday, June 9, at a gathering in Eugene, Oregon with numerous friends and family. A Bay Area celebration is forthcoming and will be announced at a later date. Please email: mercysidbury@comcast.net if you would like to be informed of this gathering.

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Summer Sampler

July 26-27 and
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*“As always with ODC...
anticipate superlative, witty
modern dance par excellence.”*
- San Francisco Chronicle

Photo by RJ Muna

odc odc.dance/summersampler

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A **premiere** with a new score by Paul Dresher
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@ **DZINE** (128 Utah Street, SF)
September 13-15, 2019

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FREE Performance
ybgfestival.org

Trace Figures

A **premiere** with a new score by Paul Dresher
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@ **DZINE** (128 Utah Street, SF)
September 13-15, 2019

More information at mjdc.org

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In association with
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Tickets: \$28-\$78 at sfethnicedancefestival.org or 510.642.9988. 50% discount for children 16 & under. Group & subscriber discounts available.

All photos by RJ Muna. Pictured: Afro Urban Society, Feng Ye Dance Studio, Te Mana O Te Ra, Diamano Coura, West African Dance Company, Guru Shradha + Antara Asthaayi Dance + Navia Dance Academy

*"The musicians and dancers
of this Festival are
consummately professional
and dazzlingly virtuosic."*
- San Francisco Chronicle



Invaluable Lessons

by AMY SEIWERT

MY FIRST WEEK as Artistic Director of Sacramento Ballet, I learned we had lost our warehouse space and would need to deeply consolidate our sets and costumes. As my Production Manager walks me through the warehouse, I point to things we can let go of, and things I see us using again. He points to a set, “Please tell me I can let go of this.” I realize I am looking at San Francisco Ballet’s old Romeo and Juliet set, probably purchased in the mid-90s. I danced on this set back then in my former boss Ron Cunningham’s production. This is also the set of my other former boss, Michael Smuin. Probably the same set seen when PBS aired Smuin’s Romeo and Juliet on “Dance in America.” Worlds collide. Being back in Sacramento was already surreal enough. This moment encapsulated the “it’s complicated” status I was so profoundly feeling. (And no, I did not let him get rid of the set.)

What a long strange trip it has been. This first season has challenged me in ways I could not have imagined and was rewarding in ways I did not know possible. I am writing this a few days after Sacramento Ballet finished our first season under my leadership. That milestone gave me the opportunity to look back on a vision statement I had written to the Sacramento Ballet Board a year ago. When I read that statement, it’s easy to measure where I as an artist and we as an organization have succeeded, and where there is still work to be done.

Both these things went well, and both these things will continue. Val Caniparoli served as our first Beer & Ballet mentor and has signed on to do so again in 2020. I am excited that we have evolved this opportunity and one work created for our 2019 Beer & Ballet by Sacramento Ballet artist Isaac Bates-Vinueza will be further developed for our main stage in our 19-20 Season.

I wrote that Sacramento Ballet would continue to be a community leader. That art changes lives, and we would be a catalyst for that change in Sacramento. We have done this by continuing strong programs such as the Leaps and Bounds program, which offers free classes onsite at two Title 1 schools as well as our Community Event, which subsidizes more than 1800 tickets to students and families. Our *Nutcracker* School Matinees, where ticket prices range between \$15-20 per student, reached over 6000 children.

We also found new ways to uniquely engage. For example, we did our first virtual



Sacramento Ballet / photo by Keith Sutter



Amy Seiwert / photo by Steve DiBartolomeo

field trip. This was a closed livestream of rehearsal utilizing 180° cameras, which was followed by an interactive Q&A with artists.

We are exploring how to reach into other communities. We started a dance class that focuses on balance and fall prevention for Seniors, which is already at capacity. And through my connection with AXIS Dance Company, we are exploring how to develop a program for dance and disability in our School.

The most valuable lesson I learned this year was that I can do hard things. I thought I knew this, but early in the season

I undertook the biggest creative challenge of my career, a full-length *Nutcracker*. It was the first moment I felt like I had been training my whole life for this job. I had to read and mark up the score to communicate with our conductor and the Philharmonic what changes musically would occur. The action of sitting with this score for hours led me to hear the music in a new way and develop a new relationship with the music I’d known since I was eight years old. Fortunately, I have cats, and while I cannot herd them, years of trying helped with the task of creating on the cast of 300 children. As a woman with a fear of guns, I choreographed a battle scene. And I was able to show my love of the classical ballet language and form, creating a snow scene that makes my heart sing. Some in this community have worried my choreographic style is too contemporary to lead a ballet company; my hope is this *Nutcracker* calms their concerns.

Not all days were wins. It does not matter if you’ve created the most brilliant ballet in the world if your community does not know it’s happening. Even though this was the first new professional production of the *Nutcracker* by Sacramento Ballet in 30 years, we received minimal press and no coverage from the local paper, the *Sacramento Bee*. We have not been able to get one review in print since I have been here. Fortunately, *Nutcracker* has enough brand recognition and tradition that we achieved record-breaking sales. But

Stephen Mills’ *Hamlet*, while an artistic success, failed to meet our projected revenue goals. Perhaps I overestimated demand for full-length story ballets, maybe it was the February holiday weekend, maybe it was pure powder in the Sierras - but we were not able to get people interested in coming to see the work. Fortunately, those who did - stood up. Our artists were astounding in this piece, and patrons who were there started to see my future vision for this company.

We do have four new company dancers and three new apprentices joining us next year. Of the seven artists joining, three are dancers of color. Ballet has a diversity issue, and it is only by looking honestly at the problem that we can be a part of the change. We are also a company that does not yet have pay equity, an issue as a woman that makes me extremely uncomfortable. Nor do our artists make a wage I am proud of. It is hard to implement change here when I inherited a company with debt and getting out of that has had to be our first priority. But this is a place where I will continue to advocate. We have fewer dancers than before I became Artistic Director, and I am not interested in adding more dancers to our ranks until we can address both of those issues in a financially responsible way.

The opportunity to lead this company has allowed me to imagine new relationships. Remember that *Romeo and Juliet* set from the beginning of the article? What if I collaborate with a local artist to repurpose the set with a new visual design that allows for a re-interpretation of this classic tale? I hope to premiere my own *Romeo and Juliet* in 2021 when Sacramento Ballet steps back into this city’s newly renovated Community Center Theater.

AMY SEIWERT is the Founding Artistic Director of Amy Seiwert’s Imagery and the Artistic Director of Sacramento Ballet (as of July 2018). Amy Seiwert’s Imagery, a contemporary ballet company in San Francisco, believes that ballet is an expressive and vital voice relevant to our times. Imagery’s artists share the belief that through collaboration and experimentation we can break away from habitual reactions and express more vibrant and courageous ideas. Imagery’s mission is to expand the definition of ballet by exploding preconceptions of what ballet is and can be.

Amy Seiwert’s Imagery presents
SKETCH 9: Perspective: July 17-20,
ODC Theater, SF. asimagery.org



Sacramento Ballet / Photos by Keith Sutter

AMY SEIWERT’S IMAGERY PRESENTS

**SKETCH 9 :
PERSPECTIVE**

Jul 17-20, ODC Theater, SF

SKETCH 9 : PERSPECTIVE marks the 9th iteration of Imagery’s celebrated SKETCH Series, an annual creative laboratory which provides a safe place for risk-taking in ballet-based choreography. During an intensive 5-week rehearsal period three choreographers will each create a new ballet for the eight dancers of Amy Seiwert’s Imagery. Original works by Amy Seiwert, Artistic Fellow Ben Needham-Wood, and Chicago-based choreographer Stephanie Martinez explore new potentials on utilizing projection as a theatrical lighting source, stepping out of the traditional mindset of how to light a ballet.

asimagery.org

Summer Reads

EDITOR’S NOTE: *Dancers’ Group put out a call for our members to share what they’re reading, listening to, and learning from. Below is a wide-ranging collection of these recommendations.*

EMERGENT STRATEGY
By: adrienne maree brown

Artists are creative problem solvers. This book validates our relationship to creativity and strategizes how to make more possibilities and build more resilience, instead of feeling resource scarce.
—*Recommended by: Yayoi Kambara*

HOW TO DO NOTHING: RESISTING THE ATTENTION ECONOMY
By: Jenny Odell

Many dance artists are responding to the "attention economy" of social media and reality television. Some of us run in the opposite direction trying to create IRL experiences nostalgic for a pre-technological world. Others dive into pop and tech and like like like with deconstruction and critical analysis. And some dancers just wanna have fun, where pleasure is subversive and admittedly we and the vast majority of our audiences have a smartphone in our purse or pocket and multiple social media accounts. This is a book that supports our questioning of the attention economy and gives us frameworks for creating better worlds.
—*Recommended by: Keith Hennessy*

DANCING IN BLACKNESS
By: Halifu Osumar

Many dancers will remember Halifu as a mover and shaker in the Oakland dance community in the 1970s and 80’s. It’s fun to read about those times, and the book is a memoir of an amazing life in dance as well as an important history of black dance in America. Most moving and revealing for me; it is a personal telling of the experience of being a black dancer during the past 50 years.
—*Recommended by: Ruth Botchan, Director of Berkeley Moving Arts and The Ruth Botchan Dance Company*

JEMELE HILL IS UNBOTHERED (PODCAST)
By: Jemele Hill

Jemele Hill, best known from her time at ESPN and her critiques of the current president, is a spitfire that aims to acknowledge the truth around politics, sports, and pop culture. Her podcast does exactly that in an enlightening and insightful way through personal opinion and in-depth interviews with celebrity guests and influencers. Available for streaming on Spotify.
—*Recommended by: Andréa Spearman, Dance Maker/Arts Administrator/Opinion Haver*

MASTERING YOUR INNER CRITIC
By: Susan Mackenty Brady

Lots of good insight into confronting self-defeating messages, building stronger relationships, embracing one’s own strength, wisdom, power, and asking for what you really want.
—*Recommended by: Sandi Scheuber, Freelance Choreographer*

THE HIDDEN LIFE OF TREES: WHAT THEY FEEL HOW THEY COMMUNICATE
By: Peter Wohlleben

This book tells a Secret Story of Life, Death and Regeneration.
Recommended by: Lisa Townsend

THE GARDEN OF EVENING MISTS
By: Tan Twan Eng

Amid "the stillness of the mountains" and "the depth of the silence," a story slowly unfolds. Very, very slowly. A beautifully written book of historic fiction set in Malaya right after World War II filled with memory, beauty, sadness, and the ugly of the effects of war. The reader learns about existential gardening concepts such as shakkei, "borrowed scenery"; that "every aspect of gardening is a form of deception."
—*Recommended by: Nancy Karp, Artistic Director/Nancy Karp + Dancers*

EXIT WEST
By: Mohsin Hamid

Profoundly intimate and inventive, this contemporary work tells a story of love, loyalty, and courage of a couple escaping from a violent civil war in their home country. It is both of our time and for all time past and sadly the future. Well written.
—*Recommended by: Nancy Karp, Artistic Director/Nancy Karp + Dancers*

CAN WE ALL BE FEMINISTS?
By: June Eric-Udorie, Editor

This anthology has a focus on intersectionality and forward momentum for feminism. It made me think. It taught me something. It asked hard questions.
—*Recommended by: Jo Kreiter, Choreographer/ Site Artist*

ART AND INTIMACY: HOW THE ARTS BEGAN
By Ellen Dissanayake

I enjoyed this book because she speaks about art through the lens of human development, particularly the dance of infancy which is what we teach at Luna workshops.
—*Recommended by: Patricia Reedy, Executive Director, Creativity & Pedagogy, Luna Dance Institute*

WEIRD DANCE: CURIOUS AND BIZARRE DANCING TRIVIA
By: Tim Rayborn and Abigail Keyes

Weird Dance is an entertaining and sometimes macabre look at the stranger tales of dance history, starting with early man and tracing strange stories through to the 20th century. I admit that my partner and I wrote this book together! We intended this book for the casual reader (no footnotes or endnotes) but we do feel that specialists in the field will enjoy it as well. While it's certainly not a comprehensive history (we focused on antiquity, Western Europe, the US, and a little bit in the Middle East—which is my area of expertise), it does illuminate some of the more obscure and possibly overlooked elements of our dancing past, like whatever happened to Mata Hari’s head? And why did ballet dancers used to keep their worn out pointe shoes? And who danced at the infamous Suicide Club in Chicago? We also think that dance teachers of junior high and high school-aged students will appreciate this text for its humor and well-researched irreverence.

It is part 3 of a series: *Weird Music* (formerly named *Beethoven's Skull*), *Weird Theater* (formerly named *Shakespeare's Ear*), and now, *Weird Dance* (originally titled *Isadora Duncan's Neck*).

—*Recommended by: Abigail Keyes*

CLASS ACT
By: Cholly Atkins & Jacqui Malone

There aren’t many detailed accounts of tap dancers and our history. This one is colorful and reads like the author speaks. It feels like he’s sharing anecdotes with you.
—*Recommended by: Gregg Geoffroy*

FOOTPRINTS OF THE DANCE: AN EARLY SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY DANCE MASTER'S NOTEBOOK
By: Jennifer Neville

This first analysis of the recently-found notebook is a fascinating read because it gives us the never-before seen glimpse into the daily life of a dancing master in the 17th century. Jennifer Neville’s interpretations are insightful but she also gives the best description of the history of dance that I’ve ever read. By referencing information from her vast research into the area, Jennifer illuminates a connective thread that reaches all the way into the present day. It is inspiring, well-researched, thorough, and full of detail that transports the reader into another time. And the bibliography alone is worth the price of the book for any serious dance researcher.
—*Recommended by: Jennifer A Meller, Director of Creative Development, New York Baroque Dance Company*

THE CYCLE: A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO MANAGING ARTS ORGANIZATIONS
By: Michael M. Kaiser and Brett E. Egan

Good insight into long range programming and potentially offers 'refreshers'.
Recommended by: Shannon Preto, Lenora Lee Dance Company Manager

ODC.DANCE/STORIES
By: Marie Tollon and guests

Short articles and essays about dance in the Bay Area featuring local and visiting artists.
—*Recommended by: Fran Jamison, Senior Marketing Manager at ODC*

PLEASURE ACTIVISM
By: adrienne maree brown

Pleasure Activism is the book that comes after brown's publishing of *Emergent Strategy*, which is also a phenomenal text. *Pleasure Activism* centers the voices of various Black femmes / folks, both living and who have passed (Audre Lorde amongst others); each voice sharing a specific approach to re-centering joy, pleasure, and the erotic within and outside of their personal lives and mandating that the erotic re-enter current activist/non-profit/grassroots organizations, movements, and adjacent spaces as a critical driving force; the erotic as alchemist.
I'm still reading it, but so far the writing weaves between the poetic, theoretical, narrative/story-telling, interview mode, and there is surely something inside of the book for everyone.
—*Recommended by: randy reyes*

MAKING DANCES THAT MATTER: RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITY CREATIVITY
By: Anna Halprin with Rachel Kaplan

Offers a blueprint for how to use dance in communities, for both healing and social change. Full of scores that readers can easily adapt to work with different groups. An inspiring summation of Anna Halprin's teachings.
—*Recommended by: Sue Heinemann*



FIND SPACE, CREATE

HIGHLIGHTING VENUES & STUDIO SPACE AROUND THE BAY AREA



Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americana (MACLA): Castellano Playhouse

MACLA is an inclusive contemporary arts space grounded in the Chicano/Latino experience that incubates new visual, literary and performance art in order to engage people in civic dialogue and community transformation. The Playhouse is a black box style theater which is an unadorned performance space equipped with a digital projector and screen, WiFi, and sound system with MP3/auxiliary input. ADA compliant and accessible without stairs.

MACLA’s Castellano Playhouse:
4821.25 sq. ft.
Rents start at \$75 per hour
510 S. 1st Street, San José



Temple Isaiah Social Hall

A 1,300 square foot ballroom has vaulted ceilings, tall windows for natural lighting and includes a stage. It can accommodate up to 550 in auditorium seating and 300 people at tables. Also features a new, fully equipped modern kitchen, WiFi, digital projector and screen, and a piano. From the hilltop setting, the outdoor courtyard areas offer views of the Lafayette Reservoir.

Temple Isaiah Social Hall:
Rents start at \$600 per day
945 Risa Road, Lafayette

Find these and more spaces for dance at bayareaspaces.org

indance
JUL/AUG 2019

11



THE BIG REVEAL

A Fog Beast convening where dance performance, interactive learning sessions and migratory bloodlines intersect.

ARTISTIC DIRECTION:

Melecio Estrella and Andrew Ward

MUSICAL DIRECTION:

Ben Juodvalkis

PERFORMERS:

Katie Faulkner, Danny Nguyen, Melissa Lewis, Wailana Simcock, Janine Trinidad, Patricia West, and Special Guests

The Big Reveal is commissioned by Dancers' Group and co-presented by The Asian Art Museum.

Entry to the **Asian Art Museum** in San Francisco and performances FREE with registration. More info at:

FOG BEAST



The commissioning and production of this world premiere is made possible by the Gerbode Foundation Special Award in the Arts program.

fogbeast.com

DANCERS' GROUP Executive Director: Wayne Hazzard, Program Director: Michelle Lynch Reynolds, Program Assistants: Valerie Mendez and Andréa Spearman, Bookkeeper: Michele Simon, Design: Sharon Anderson

Dancers' Group gratefully acknowledges the support of Bernard Osher Foundation, California Arts Council, Fleishhacker Foundation, Grants for the Arts, JB Berland Foundation, Kenneth Rainin Foundation, Koret Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, San Francisco Arts Commission, Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, Walter & Elise Haas Fund, William & Flora Hewlett Foundation, Zellerbach Family Foundation and generous individuals.

