



indance

SEP 2019

DISCOURSE & DIALOGUE TO UNIFY, STRENGTHEN, & AMPLIFY

dancersgroup
44 Gough Street, Suite 201
San Francisco, CA 94103
dancersgroup.org



Bahiya Movement, article on p. 9

Photo by Chani Bockwinkel

PRESORTED
FIRST CLASS MAIL
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #16
PENALUMA, CA



Alyssa Mitchel presents
The Classroom: Sep, 7-8

Photo by Kyle Adler



American Bon Dances: Sep 1

Photo courtesy of the artist

Welcome

by WAYNE HAZZARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Flourish has become a favorite word. You can use flourish to describe style, a mindset, prosperity, and accomplishment. Depending on how you think of flourishing, paradoxical thoughts might get mixed in. For example, if I'm worried can I still flourish? Yes. What if I've been diagnosed with a terminal medical condition do I stop flourishing? No. Can I flourish without a ton of funds? Yes.

Over the summer months, and with a practical flourish, Dancers' Group has been able to increase the grant award in our CASH regranting program from \$3,000 to \$3,500. Our ambition is to find additional funding partners that can help us increase grant funds for creative projects—projects might include making a new dance or performing previous works again. If you're not familiar with the CASH grant program, now in its 20th year, visit our website to learn how these grants provide direct support for an expanding range of creativity activity.

We know from past experience and previous CASH awardees that when applicants have been able to plan well and allot significant time to discuss and review their proposal materials—with a variety of people—those proposals tend to do well. The hard fact is that even top-ranked projects might not be funded (we call these applications finalists) due to the fact that there are more finalist applications than available funds. To encourage dialogue about the program and address applicant questions, Dancers' Group staff will be available to meet and go over the CASH application process the week of September 8-13. Our doors will be open to drop in, call, or email with your questions. Or if time is tight, consider reaching out to make an appointment to talk further. The fall deadline to apply to CASH is Wednesday, October 2.

I'm delighted to formally introduce two new Dancers' Group staff. And if you've already been greeted, spoke by phone, or received an email from them then here's a tad more information on what these artist-administrators will bring. As the new Community Resource Manager Katie Taylor will support an ever-expanding artistic community. Katie is a dancer and teacher and is on faculty at Danspace in Oakland where she manages their Adult Division program. We're eager to capitalize on Katie's experience in bringing resources to communities in an equitable and accessible manner. Our second addition to the office, as Artist Resource Manager, is Zoe Donnellycolt. Zoe is a performance artist based in Oakland and she has shown work at SAFEhouse Arts, The Foundry Nights and Salta. Zoe will be the point person for regranting programs like CASH and will support the fundraising activities of our fiscally sponsored artists and companies. And we are fortunate to continue to work with all-around superwoman Andréa Spearman.

Many imagine arts administration as something tedious. I don't. I don't differentiate my past work as a dancer and choreographer to my current administrative process. The process for me is the same: I dream of what I am interested in bringing forth; I get messy and make things that go through multiple refinements (phrases - grant proposals); I discard ideas (movement - programs); I rearrange sections; I discover something new; I have doubts about the material; and often I wake up with an idea that I can't wait to share with my co-workers (dancers - collaborators).

We flourish in the light of potential.

MEMBERSHIP

Dancers' Group – publisher of *In Dance* – provides resources to artists, the dance community, and audiences through programs and services that are as collaborative and innovative as the creative process.

LEVELS AND BENEFITS

Community (FREE):

- Performances This Week emails
- Weekly emails featuring audition and job notices, artistic opportunities, news, and more
- Artist resources (no login required) and other content on Dancers' Group's website
- Access to Grant Calendar of upcoming deadlines
- Action alerts about arts policy and special opportunities
- Pick up *In Dance* for free at Dancers' Group's office or one of our drop-off locations

Individual (\$50/yr, \$90/2yr):

All Community benefits plus:

- All Community benefits plus:
- 10 issues of *In Dance* mailed to you each year
- Discounts to performances, classes, workshops, space rentals, and more
- Full access to resources on dancersgroup.org
- Bay Area Dance Week registration discount

Company (\$85/yr, \$153/2yr):

All Community & Individual benefits plus:

DISCOUNTS ON:

- Bay Area Dance Week guide advertising
- In Dance advertising
- Postcard Distribution

JOIN or RENEW

415-920-9181 / dancersgroup.org

ADVERTISE

For ad rates and upcoming deadlines:
dancersgroup.org/advertising
katie@dancersgroup.org

CONTENTS



P.8

ON THIS PAGE /

Building a House of Culture

by Rob Taylor

3 / Healing the Immigrant Body with Performance

by Mabel Valdiviezo

4 / Presidio Theatre Relaunch

by Heather Desaulniers

6 / September Performance Calendar

8 / SPEAK: SUNSET DANCES

by Lizz Roman

9 / Did You Know? Bahiya Movement

10 / IN PRACTICE: Meet Talli Jackson

by Sima Belmar

(Above): Lizz Roman and Dancers / by Daniller Photography

BUILDING A HOUSE OF CULTURE: Jesús Cortez's Journey to Create Cuicacalli Dance Company

by ROB TAYLOR

HOW MANY TIMES has a dancer dreamed over a cup of tea at La Boheme? The cafe beneath Dance Mission Studio at 24th and Mission streets in San Francisco has hosted so many pre-class/post-class meet-ups among dancers that if its walls could speak, they would spin a tale of San Francisco's dance community over the past twenty years rivaling any history the most attuned member of the dance community could recall. Dreams to movement, cultivated in conversation among friends and among community.

I met with Jesús Cortez at La Boheme on a cool summer morning to hear him describe how his dream came to be a reality in San Francisco. Jesús is the director and choreographer of Cuicacalli Dance Company and in that role he has manifested a dream that brought him here from Vera Cruz, Cancun and Mexico City, to Dallas/Fort Worth and New Mexico in the US, and finally to San Francisco, where he has built an artistic practice focused on both Ballet Folklórico and Contemporary Dance styles that he will be sharing with the community at the Rotunda Dance Series in San Francisco's City Hall on Friday, September 6th.

The original dream, the childhood dream, as often is for young people around the world, was football. As a child in Vera Cruz, Jesús' initial interest in footwork was contained to the soccer pitch, but from the age of six his mother "was very strict about me taking dance classes. I could do anything I wanted, but before I did anything else I had to go to classes every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday." His teacher was his great grand uncle, Juan Natoli, who ran a dance academy in Vera Cruz named Cuicacalli. After 11 years of training with his uncle, Jesús moved to Cancun to dance there and began to envision a career as a professional dancer. This dream came closer to reality when he joined the Ballet Folklórico de México de Amalia Hernández. Based in Mexico City, the company is the most prestigious Ballet Folklórico company in the world. Performing with that company was a further advancement in Ballet Folklórico, but by virtue of being in Mexico City and touring to other international and cosmopolitan cities, he began to dream of working as a contemporary dancer as well as a traditional one.

That growing interest led to the decision to move to Dallas/Fort Worth to focus on contemporary dance. As his studies progressed he began to see contemporary dance as a practice that could exist in correlation with his Folklórico training, instead of in opposition to it. After a year or so in Texas, a friend convinced him to move to Santa Fe, New Mexico to teach dance in a public school. He reflects that "It was an opportunity, and it was a little challenging for me because at the time I was a full-time dancer and it wasn't in my plans at that moment to start teaching." He taught Ballet Folklórico in the schools, but also joined Moving People Dance Santa Fe to continue working on his contemporary vocabulary.

But teaching students in New Mexico brought forth a new dream for Jesús, one that re-connected him with his familial and artistic lineage. He realized that if he "taught all these students [the same dances] I learned when I was a child I would be passing on all the learning that my great grand uncle gave me, that the most important things were hard work, discipline, commitment, and to respect the tradition and be true to our culture." He firmly taps his hand on the table, continuing "that was the foundation, and without that foundation I wouldn't be where I am as a dancer, as a choreographer, as a director. So I started teaching the students



Top photo by Andy Mogg, Group photo by Sam Rodar

the way I learned as a child, and I liked the results, and I decided to continue being a teacher." Eventually Moving People Dance Company's members dispersed to larger cities where there were more opportunities for dance, and Jesús moved to San Francisco.

The dream was to live as a teacher and practitioner of dance; the work was intense and the progression slow. He danced for Printz Dance Project and took classes with Robert Moses among others, but his intention was to build an academy for dance. He recalls that he and his girlfriend at the time (now wife) were "flying everywhere in the Mission and the Excelsior and throughout the city. We rented a studio and for the first two months I only had one student! But I kept going because if I had at least one student then I had school." He moved to a new studio at the Katherine Michiels school on Guerrero street where classes began to grow, and when he outgrew that space a friend introduced him to Brava for Women in the Arts, and their theater and studio spaces on 24th street in the Mission District.

He speaks of his experience at Brava with reverence: "It was something magical. I started renting the studio on Saturdays. Now Brava has been our home for the past 12 years." Far gone are the days when Jesús kept the dream alive with just one student; today Jesús teaches eight classes a week for over 50 regular students and is an artist-in-residence at Brava. In the spring of each year, the entire company performs an annual production, "Tradición, Movimiento y Pasión" in Brava's main theater. He was recently able to take Cuicacalli Dance Company on their first tour and a return to Santa Fe was one of the stops. He's planning a tour in the future to take his company to Mexico, and take his American students to Vera Cruz where his journey first began.

Jesús describes his school as a dance formation school where children as young as six begin with Ballet Folklórico and develop their skills over time in additional classes that include Hip-Hop and Contemporary dance. He is proud to share that over time they "now have a couple of generations of dancers who were dancing with me and are now dancing in professional level companies." Furthermore, he continues, "the dance academy has been built in honor of my great grand uncle, with the name also being Cuicacalli—once again it means "House of Culture." Other people know Cuicacalli as "House of Singing," but because [the Cuicacalli] was the place where the Nahua

children [the Nahua are an indigenous culture in Southern Mexico and Central America] would be sent to learn singing, dancing, and the arts I call it the House of Culture. Period."

And it's really a house of many cultures, according to Jesús "we don't only do Ballet Folklórico from Mexico. We do Afro-Cuban, Afro-Nicaraguan, Afro-Peruvian, among other styles. We hire choreographers [from these traditions]. The vision of the school is to be an overall dance academy, not to be only one style. We also have a youth mariachi group. That's why I call it Cuicacalli Dance company and not Ballet Folklórico Cuicacalli, which I do when we perform just Ballet Folklórico. But we have many branches."

For Jesús, there's a reward as a teacher, "but also as a carrier of the tradition of my great grand uncle. Sometimes when we are in other countries it's very easy to lose [touch with culture] because there aren't that many people who are passing it down." He continues, "so even though I am not passing it down to my community in Mexico, I feel that my part of the tradition is to pass it down to the people who left Mexico and don't have those outlets anymore." That transference of tradition extends to his own family. His daughter is a member of the group, and his son is just about to start classes.

When I ask about his teaching, he shares that he "likes to see students who become professional dancers, but I also want to see students who don't become professional dancers just become better people. I say that when I teach dance, I'm teaching life. Everything you do in dance classes is going to relate to what you're going to be doing in the streets, what you're going to be doing in a job. It's all about the discipline, hard work, you know, the commitment."

When I say he's fulfilling his dreams, Jesús agrees, saying "It's not very easy to find a job that you love, and right now I am doing that job, and I love it and I am passionate about it. And I'm looking for more, I have big dreams and I know the dreams will not happen unless you pursue them and take action.

When he brings his dancers to San Francisco City Hall for the Rotunda Dance Series, they will perform Ballet Folklórico Mexicano using style associated with several different states of Mexico. He also says that the company will perform a "Contemporary

Continued on pg 11 »

Healing the Immigrant Body with Performance

by MABEL VALDIVIEZO

DURING MY 16 YEARS as an undocumented artist, I was deeply disconnected from my body and from society at large. The heavy impact of my status affected my entire existence. I lived in silence, underground, and saw no chance to reclaim my being. I didn't realize that my physical being was holding deep fear and that trauma and illness had ravaged my once healthy body. Unsurprisingly, I became very sick.

A sheer will to live took me through recovery. My whole being ached for movement, fulfillment, and freedom. I began to imagine a vision that would take me out of isolation and into empowerment for myself, my community, and my culture. Within that context, *Metamorphosis: Phase 1* came into being.

Gestation

Metamorphosis is a multimedia dance performance that combines contemporary and indigenous movement, storytelling, and shamanic ritual with interactive visuals and sounds to explore the intersection of family separation, trauma and the well-being of Latinx immigrant women. We ask the question, "How do we alleviate suffering and restore hope through an artistic process that is rooted in our indigenous culture, and the healing of our individual and collective body?"

What follows is a conversation with my collaborators, choreographer Juliana Mendonca, and technologist Travis Bennett, where we delve into the artistic process and development of our work.

Mabel Valdiviezo: Juliana, we met during Kinotech Arts DanceHack at CounterPulse in 2018. I was new to dance and hoped you would join me in this adventure.

Juliana Mendonca: Our encounter during DanceHack was a beautiful synchronization. I remember the clarity and force with which you presented the story on immigrant Latina women and I felt that this story related to me. A connection was created between us and it was accelerated when you were selected for the CounterPulse Combustible Residency. I felt it was a very interesting opportunity to contribute and share my work as a choreographer and dancer. And a way to give life and depth to a story that also has to do with my personal life and my sensitivity to shamanism and healing through art.

MV: Travis, the pre-prototype we developed during Kinotech Arts' DanceHack expanded my mind to the possibilities of mixing dance, technology, and shamanism to create a vision of wholeness. When we met, I thought that you were so perfect for *Metamorphosis*.

Travis Bennett: My background is in technology, art, and community work through Kinotech Arts. I love to help out other artists, so that my work and my own perspective isn't so technology-focused. After meeting you, I thought the story you're trying to tell is very important. The topics being addressed in this work are very prescient. The current political climate and nationwide debate over immigration is certainly worth exploring.

On a broader level, I am interested in the idea of othering, whoever the underdog is,

the minority group; the idea that these people are not like us and so should be feared and admonished. What does that mean in our society and what does that mean personally to be dismissed and not thought of as important enough to be treated with dignity and respect?

MV: Juliana, your background as a choreographer and an immigrant from Venezuela influences our work.

JM: *Metamorphosis* comes at a very special moment in my life where being a recent immigrant has been a test for personal improvement, an identity crisis, and an opportunity to transcend limits and create new possibilities.

Choreography and interpretative dancing is the creative path that has enabled me to know myself, heal, and cultivate my femininity. I studied contemporary dance and Butoh and have researched traditional Venezuelan and Latin American dances. Through all of these, I have developed a vocabulary that expresses my concerns in dance and reflections on life.

Envisioning Metamorphosis

MV: As the Artistic Director, I am grateful for CounterPulse's residency. We are able to experiment for six months; engage in artistic dialogue, investigate the intersection of embodiment, dance and tech; also bringing community voices and truths into the dance space.

We are developing a work that can be socially, culturally, and artistically impactful. *Metamorphosis* incorporates shamanic ritual inspired by the Peruvian Amazonian culture and an interactive healing garden with

A ritual space emerges where we envision the past, present, and future of immigrant women

artwork by painter Limbert Gonzalez. The original score by Ronald Sanchez, aka "Altiplano," blends electronic beats with native influences. The project includes art and dance movement workshops in the Latinx community with the intention of healing the contested territory of the immigrant body.

Choreography Brings Narrative to Life

Metamorphosis has an overarching narrative influenced by a Latin American indigenous worldview and the heroine's journey archetype. In this piece, the dance portrays an indigenous woman surviving systematic and gender violence while she crosses the U.S. Mexican border. Seeking solace, she encounters a Peruvian shaman who guides her to a healing garden. She begins her path to wholeness and reemerges as the Aztec earth goddess Tonantzin.

JM: In our piece, the choreography explores elements of contemporary dance, indigenous shamanic dance, and physical theater. From the combination of these different "languages," the choreography interprets the narrative and symbolic elements of the story through physical actions, specific movements,



Photos by Robbie Sweeny



gestures, images and improvisational patterns that define the dance and the characters.

The content of the narrative explores movement in a way that goes from the concrete to the abstract and vice versa. Additionally, technology and music are elements that influence the choreography.

MV: This mixing of contemporary and indigenous movement is what makes our piece evocative.

JM: As Latin American immigrants, you and I are women artists who have been searching within the sensitivity and knowledge of our ancestral culture for universal answers and deeper connection.

The narrative of *Metamorphosis* designates the aesthetic aspects of the characters and even the body language for each dancer. In this case, the immigrant woman is defined in contemporary body language and the shaman in an indigenous language. This fusion between the indigenous ancestral and the contemporary increase the possibilities of creative movement. A ritual space emerges where we envision the past, present, and future of immigrant women.

Converging Dance and Tech

MV: Travis, I'm curious how you see the role that technology plays?

TB: Technology is one of the best mediums for collaboration because it needs a lot of exploration and experimentation to figure out how to be effective, tell a story, and evoke certain emotions. This is a lengthy process and continual effort to tease out the subtle details and characteristics that technology can bring to the performance. The residency gives us the time and space to explore this topic with the technology to find the right balance of concerns, narrative, and expression that can take our piece to the next level.

MV: We have given a lot of thought to our themes and the tech side.

TB: The dual nature of a modern immigrant's journey (leaving everything behind for a chance at something better) is a dense tapestry of interwoven hopes and fears. We use a variety of tools and techniques throughout the piece to expose this struggle to succeed in a world of heightened cultural divides, increased political instability, and algorithmic bias.

Through the simple act of masking or revealing, we seek knowledge, relief, and understanding (with our custom software, 3D depth sensors, and cameras). We mask dangers and reveal truths. We hide pain and show love. We heal and gain transcendence.

As a collective of artists, we rework these

ideas on the conceptual side and experiment with visuals and technology, music and choreography, and how they all interrelate. The process ends up finding things that are emotionally resonant that are a good fit for the piece. They become a much more refined toolkit for us to explore further.

Trauma and Healing Using Dance and Tech

MV: Travis, two key topics in the piece are trauma and healing of the immigrant body. Enacting them through technology is a difficult balancing act.

TB: How do we direct the energy of the piece to avoid re-triggering trauma? I am thinking about the night time attack scene that we are exploring. Using a technique like the heat map, we are able to let the audience imagine what could be happening in that scene more than what we are putting in on display for them to watch. This moment becomes an internal emotional struggle. When we bring the technology in that way, we create a bigger impact and draw the audience in.

The same thing works in the healing parts of the piece when we start to expose another level of consciousness or spirituality that is not normally seen. We'll be able to expand the understanding and the energy of what we're performing so that there is another level of themes on top of what we are showing and dancing. Using the technology, we can actually tip our hat to inter-dimensionality.

Working with the Latinx Community

MV: *Metamorphosis* calls for a strong community component.

We are facilitating a series of free Art for Healing workshops for immigrant women at La Voz Latina in The Tenderloin and in The Mission district as a way of building empowerment and resilience through collage, drawing, painting, and dance movement. The performance and the workshops seek to alleviate the stress felt by the Latinx community due to inhumane immigration policies that are directly impacting immigrant families, and exposing them to post-traumatic stress. We honor the creativity and courage of immigrant women with a community art exhibit at CounterPulse during our September performances.

MABEL VALDIVIEZO is a 21st-century techno-shaman who employs the arts as a means of expression to achieve social justice for cultural, community, and gender healing. Utilizing a multidisciplinary lens, she creates immersive works through film, dance, video art, and painting to explore transnational migration, displacement, and women's spirituality. arts4healing.org

TRAVIS BENNETT is a Bay Area web content creator, immersive technology researcher, and technical artist. His work explores the nature of society's relationship with emerging technologies; such as AR, VR, motion capture, and human movement.

JULIANA MENDONCA is a Venezuelan contemporary dance performer, choreographer and teacher based in Oakland. Juliana co-founded Raíz de Agua, a live music and dance company that creates projects inspired by nature and our relationship with it.

Metamorphosis: Phase 1, Thu-Sat, Sep 12-14 & 19-21, CounterPulse, counterpulse.org/combustible2019



Presidio Theatre Relaunch

by HEATHER DESAULNIERS

RENOVATION IS A TOUGH, arduous process. Making major changes always is. Setting goals, crafting plans and then finally breaking ground, with the ultimate purpose of building something new.

Consider for a moment a structure under renovation. When you walk into such a space, what are your first thoughts and observations? Is your eye pulled to the work that still needs to be done - the unpainted wall, the exposed wiring, the flooring not yet installed. Maybe your curiosity is piqued by budget or deadlines. Is the project staying within its financial limits? Is it going to be completed on time? Or are you someone who is able to envision the next chapter? Someone who pictures glorious experiences and deep collaborative relationships developing in this new environment, both today and for decades to come. The latter is certainly a powerful perspective, one that can be even more potent when shared. Multiple gazes, together, cast on what might be possible; a cohort buoyed by a remodeled space's potential.

The renewal of the Presidio Theatre has been full of this rare and special spirit. A massive undertaking brought to fruition by a group of passionate, dedicated individuals who imagined another life for an empty building. For the past few years, these folks have worked tirelessly to transform the historic theater that sits on the Presidio grounds (the former army base, now National Park) into a contemporary performance center. Something that could help fill a gap in the San Francisco performing arts ecosystem. "The theater opened in 1939, and was primarily a place for military personnel and their families to go and see movies, and from time to time, some other performance events," explains Robert Martin, Presidio Theatre's Executive Director, "it was a hub where people could gather, for entertainment, sure, but really, as a community." It is this legacy of community impact that has fueled the renovation plans, with the hope that the revamped space will become a similar hub for today's audiences and artists - a place to encounter innovative creativity and showcase an array of art practices and disciplines. Mid-September, the updated Presidio Theatre opens to the public. As the multi-year endeavor nears its end, everyone involved is reflecting on the epic journey, one that Martin describes as "a labor of love."

While construction began in earnest two years ago, getting a broader sense of the project's trajectory requires going back a bit further. In the mid-1990s, the Presidio ceased operation as an active military base and since that time, the theater has been vacant. A lack of financial wherewithal seemed the primary reason for its long dormancy, "I think the Presidio Trust [the organization responsible for the park's care and maintenance] would have loved to have done something with the venue, but the lack of funding and other resources made any attempts extremely difficult," Martin shares. That is, until Peggy Haas, whom Martin credits as the driving force behind the new Presidio Theatre, entered the picture approximately five years back. "When passing by the building one day, Peggy found herself brimming with questions - what is this doing here; why isn't it being used; how could it be repurposed?" recounts Martin, "and being keenly aware of the need for Bay Area performance spaces, an empty theater seemed like an incredible opportunity." With the seed planted and the ideas percolating, the next step was to take the proposal to the Presidio Trust. "She took her plan to the Trust, who said that if the resources could be secured, they were on board," says Martin, "Peggy was able to take it on financially, through a major gift from the Margaret E. Haas Fund." It took two more years to get the lease signed, and by fall 2017, the renovation had begun, and Haas' vision for a Bay Area artist haven - all levels,



Photos by Terry Lorant

all groups, all fields, professional and community - was truly underway.

Every detail of the refurbishment had to go through careful scrutiny because of the necessity for historic preservation. So gutting the theater and starting from scratch wasn't an option. Nor was changing whatever they wanted to change - approvals had to be sought at many points along the way so that historic integrity could be maintained. Having said that, much was done to make the space viable and operational for its future artistic visitors. Because it had initially been built for cinematic use, the proscenium had to be moved about twelve feet, which Martin describes as "a major engineering triumph." The theater housed a basement, which had thus far been underutilized, so in the redesign, that area was excavated and expanded to twice its size, which allowed for the inclusion of dressing rooms, public restrooms, a lobby and rehearsal space. Two outdoor pavilions were also added - one houses the elevator/stairs to the basement level; the other, a catering area, green room, offices and the stage's load-in point. If you were to visit the Presidio Theatre today, you would find it in a phase of "final touches." Martin reports that everyday, something is being checked off the list, "while work on the lighting grid is ongoing as are some tasks in the outdoor plaza spaces, the house itself is mostly finished - the six hundred audience seats are in place and the stage is done."

Another exciting part of the relaunch process has been happening away from the construction site: programming and curation for the Presidio Theatre's inaugural season. Such amazing theater, film, music and choreography has been planned for the coming year and beyond! Dance-wise, one of the partnerships that Martin is very much looking forward to is with the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival, who will be celebrating their 42nd season in 2020, "a long-term goal is for the Presidio Theatre to become the festival's home; this January, we begin that journey as the festival holds their auditions here and then returns for their annual event next June." The Presidio Theatre team has also organized and curated a number of riveting movement concerts during the fall months. Sintonía is bringing the world premiere of *Tattooed*, a mixed discipline piece of music, Flamenco and spoken word that facilitates a discourse between traditional and contemporary Flamenco forms, while simultaneously tackling an urgent narrative, surviving abuse. In addition, October plays host to some significant milestones: San Francisco Mime Troupe's 60th anniversary and the 40th birthday of Balinese dance and music institution, Gamelan Sekar Jaya. And on October



11th, ODC/Dance, another constant thread in SF's artistic fabric, will reprise Co-Artistic Director KT Nelson's *Path of Miracles*, a collaboration between the company and choral ensemble Volti that looks at and to the spiritual Camino de Santiago pilgrimage. The full-length work debuted at Grace Cathedral in 2018 and since then has typically been performed in church settings, which makes this one-night engagement particularly noteworthy, "not only will this will be a chance for our patrons to experience transcendent choreography and music, but we also hope that it provides an opportunity for ODC to experiment and explore how the site-specific piece translates to a more traditional proscenium environment," adds Martin.

Before this impressive programming can really get under way, the San Francisco/Bay Area must first be introduced to the new Presidio Theatre. Slated for the weekend of September 21st and 22nd, the grand unveiling features two wonderful events. Saturday's ticketed evening includes bites and libations as well as an artistic collage of excerpts and offerings from White Crane Lion & Dragon Dance Association, the San Francisco Girls Chorus, Beach Blanket Babylon, and Tahitian performance group Te Mana O Te Ra. The following day, the entire community is invited to tour and celebrate the updated space during a free open house. The Presidio

Pop Up Orchestra will be on hand revisiting the glorious tunes of the 1930s and 1940s; a nod of honor and recognition to the theater's original opening eight decades ago.

Eighty years is indeed a substantial legacy, and everyone at the Presidio Theatre cannot wait to contribute to the next chapter of the story. And while the road to this finale has been long and occasionally bumpy, they are so thrilled to see Peggy Haas' vision fully realized. "We hope the Presidio Theatre will be a place of discovery with a vast mix of programs, and most important, that it will be user friendly for artists/arts groups in the community," Martin relays, "we are eager to welcome regional, national and international artists to the space, but the Presidio Theatre will always have a commitment to local Bay Area artists and making it a home for them."

HEATHER DESAULNIERS is a freelance dance writer based in Oakland. She is the Editorial Associate and SF/Bay Area columnist for *CriticalDance*, the dance curator for *SF Arts Monthly*, a contributor to *DanceTabs* as well as several other dance-focused publications.

Join the festivities as the Presidio Theatre re-opens September 21-22, followed by their 2019-2020 season. presidiotheatre.org

Jess Curtis/Gravity Presents

(in)Visible

How do you experience a performance?
By seeing it?
What if that's not possible?

Thu-Sun October 3-13
8pm @ CounterPulse
www.JessCurtisGravity.org



Photo By: www.hagolani.com



Hewlett 50 Arts Commissions

2019 AWARDS IN Dance & Movement-Based Performance

hewlett.org/dance

APPLY BY NOVEMBER 13

SEP 2019

calendar

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

BrasArte's Brazilian Day Festival

BrasArte, Berkeley

In its thirteenth year, BrasArte's Brazilian Day Festival pays homage to two major celebrations in Brazil: Brazil's Independence Day and a recreation of a Lavagem, a cleansing ceremony using song and dance. The festivities unfold in Berkeley as a street party. Sun, Sep 1, 10am-7pm, **FREE**.

brasarte.com

American Bon Dancing

Yerba Buena Gardens, SF

A joyous celebration of departed ancestors, Bon is a Japanese Buddhist festival that's been marked for more than five centuries with a traditional dance known as Bon-Odori. *American Bon Dancing - An Invitation to Dance* features an array of traditional masters. San Jose Taiko, one of the leading taiko ensembles outside of Japan, also performs. Sun, Sep 1, 1pm, **FREE**.

ybgfestival.org

Open Stage

CounterPulse, SF

An evening of body-based, improvisational, and poetic expression, courtesy of our weird and radical community. This is CounterPulse's fourth Open Stage. Wed, Sep 4, 6-7:30pm, **FREE**.

counterpulse.org

AXIS Dance Company

Yerba Buena Gardens, SF

Returning to the Gardens, AXIS presents a lively interactive performance with excerpts from the current repertoire including *Flutter* by Robert Dekker, *Historias Rotas* by Nadia Adame, and a peek at new work by Jennifer Archibald. Thu, Sep 5, 12:30-1:30pm, **FREE**.

ybgfestival.org

Merde Project

Joe Goode Annex, SF

An artist commissioning project created and supported by Kristin Damrow & Company and Yikes! Oakland. In its inaugural year, Merde Project brings together four choreographers to present dance works around the theme of "taking risks." Thu-Fri, Sep 5-6, 8-9:30pm, \$20.

merdeproject.com



Alyssa Mitchel, Sep 7-8 / photo by Kyle Adler



Black Choreographers Festival, Sep 7-8, Pictured: Frankie Lee Peterson III / photo courtesy of artist

Rotunda Dance Series: Cuicacalli Dance Company

City Hall Rotunda, SF

The Rotunda Dance Series brings many of the Bay Area's most celebrated dance companies to San Francisco City Hall for free monthly noon-time performances and is presented by Dancers' Group and World Arts West in partnership with Grants for the Arts and SF City Hall. Cuicacalli "House of Culture" is a year-round youth training program, in association with DANCING EARTH, the nation's foremost Indigenous contemporary dance ensemble. Founded in 2008 by renowned international performer Jesús "Jacoh" Cortes. Fri, Sep 6, 12-1pm, **FREE**.

dancersgroup.org

tiny little get down

CounterPulse, SF

tinypistol's Maurya Kerr and little seismic dance company's Katie Faulkner invite you to their autumn tiny little get down, a dance party for people who love to dance, but don't want to go clubbing or worry about looking cool, and need that 10pm-ish bedtime. If you're feeling undone yet again by our state of the union and long for a cathartic space that affirms the power of the collective, come sweat, shake, get down, and revel in this subversively joyful dance event designed for all bodies. Fri, Sep 6, 7:30-9:30pm, \$5-\$15 suggested donation at the door (to cover costs).

counterpulse.org

SOULSKIN Dance Dance Mission Theater, SF

SOULSKIN Dance is proud to premiere two new contemporary ballets: *PARALLEL DIALOGUES* - a West Coast Premiere - choreographed by Adrianna Thompson (SOULSKIN Dance artistic director) and *GOLDEN MEAN* - a World Premiere choreographed by Adrianna Thompson and guest choreographer Barbara Koch as part of their 6th Season in San Francisco. Fri, Sep 6, 8-9:30pm, \$25-\$30.

soulskindance.org

Andi Salazar, Jyoti Arvey, and Mogli's Movers Artist Collective

SAFEhouse ARTS, SF

Andi Salazar is a Chilean dancer, choreographer and sociologist, and in her new dance *Volar*, she celebrates migrants through the poetic image of birds. Jyoti Arvey's new work is based on her poetic text, *STONE AND FLESH*, incorporating drag performance, spoken word, soundscapes, and installation. Mogli's Movers Artist Collective examines the idea of transparency in their new work *Morrigans*. The collective is led by Sierra Berg. Fri-Sat, Sep 6-7, 8-10pm, \$15-\$20.

safehousearts.org

Lizz Roman & Dancers

Home Salon, SF

A new site-specific journey, engaging a home's architecture with performance, music and

film. Roman's newest project *Sunset Dances II* draws audiences into an intimate experience that unfolds in multiple locations simultaneously as audiences at 3 locations migrate throughout the home. The production includes 8 dancers, Academy Award-winning filmmaker Pete Litwinowicz, award-winning lighting designer Clyde Sheets, musician/composer Jerome Lindner and percussionist Malcolm Lee with vocalist Tamsin Black performing an original live score. Fri-Sun, Sep 6-8, 13-15, 20-22, 8:30pm, \$30.

lizzromananddancers.com

DanceFAR (For A Reason)

Herbst Theater, SF

DanceFAR 2019 is hosting a benefit for the International Rescue Committee and Gugulethu Ballet Project. All proceeds will be directed to serve the immediate needs of refugees and



CONCEPT series 26, Sep 13-14 / photo by Hilary Goidell



FROLIC, Sep 19-22 / photo by Robbie Sweeny

provide education to empower impoverished youth through dance. DanceFAR features works from today's top choreographers with international artists from companies representing the diverse Bay Area dance community. Sat Sep 7, 7-9pm, \$100.
danceFAR.org

Alyssa Mitchel

ODC Dance Commons, Studio B, SF

How do we learn? Alyssa Mitchel draws upon her background in education as she explores that question in an hour-length dance production, *The Classroom*. Each section of work examines a particular element of the learning process. Mitchel integrates the recorded interview responses and written reflections of students, teachers and professors. The work features seven dancers: Jessica Bozzo, Jessica DeFranco, Sierra Heller, Tayler Kinner, Nicole Maimon, Katherine Neumann and Frankie Lee Peterson III. The creative team includes lighting designer, Daniel Weiermann, Chicago-based jazz composer Jacob Fisher and videographer Mark McBeth. Sat Sep 7, 8pm; Sun, Sep 8, 6pm, \$20.
alyssaevmitchel.weebly.com

Black Choreographers Festival: Summer Series

Malonga Casquelourd Center, Oakland

Saturday's program will feature works by Kendra Kimbrough Barnes, Gregory Dawson and Reginald Savage, among others. Sunday's show features more than half a dozen pre-professional youth dance groups from around the Bay Area, including Frankie Lee Peterson III, New Style Motherlode, Oakland School for the Arts, On Demand, Sweat and Zaccho Youth Dance Company. Sat Sep 7, 8pm; Sun, Sep 8, 3pm, \$10-\$25.
bcfhereandnow.com

Combustible Residency

CounterPulse, SF

CounterPulse is back with year three of Combustible, their highly-acclaimed dance/technology residency that carves a place

to experiment on the edge of what is known. This year they present works that activate the entire building with shamanic healing gardens and manipulated realities. Thu-Sat, Sep 12-14 & 19-21, 7:30pm, Free-\$35.
counterpulse.org

Arielle Cole & SevanKelee Boulton

SAFEhouse ARTS, SF

In *Phone, Keys, Wallet* Arielle Cole's ArcTangent Dance explores society's transition from analog to digital through the lens of the millennial experience. SevanKelee Boulton (*Lucky 7*), presents a work exploring the history of the scarecrow and its relationship to slavery. Fri-Sat, Sep 13-14, 8pm, \$15-\$20.
safehousearts.org

CONCEPT series: 26

Green Room at SF War Memorial and Performing Arts Center, SF

RAWdance and guest artists Kim Ip/Krimum's Dance Party, randy reyes, Red Brick Company/Nick Korkos, Robert Woods-LaDue & Sarah Woods-LaDue, and Virginia Matthews. Fri, Sep 13, 8pm; Sat, Sep 14, 3pm & 7pm, \$10-\$25.
rawdance.org

Bliss Dance Company

Ohlone College Dance Studio, Fremont

Bliss Dance Company presents *Sugar Baby*. An evening length performance that will carry you through unexpected twists and turns using modern and contemporary jazz movement (For Mature Audiences). Sat, Sep 14, 8pm; Sun, Sep 15, 2pm, \$15-\$20.
blissdancecompany.org

FROLIC

Waterfront Theater, Berkeley

Shawl-Anderson Dance Center's first annual Queering Dance Festival presents FROLIC,



DanceFAR, Sep 7 / photo courtesy of the artist



SOULSKIN Dance, Sep 6 / photo by Annabelle Denmark

featuring twelve Bay Area LGBTQ+ artists. *Program A:* jose e abad, Jesselito Bie, Audrey Johnson, Melissa Lewis, Aiano Nakagawa, pateldanceworks. Thu, Sep 19, 8pm; Sat, Sep 21, 5pm; Sun, Sep 22, 7pm, \$15-\$25. *Program B:* Stephanie Hewett, Cynthia Ling Lee, Frances Sedayao, Mark Travis Dance, Janpistar, Snowflake Towers. Fri, Sep 20, 8pm; Sat, Sep 21, 8pm; Sun, Sep 22, 4pm, \$15-\$25.
shawl-anderson.org

Kickbal

SAFEhouse ARTS, SF

Kickbal = Emma Lanier & Ky Frances. Evening includes SF premiere of *Anagama*, Emma's solo about healing from pain and finding your voice again, previously shown in St. Louis and New York. This is also a rare chance to see Emma and Ky onstage together in their "lol-worthy" duet *11 Options for Beginnings of Various Dances*. Fri-Sat, Sep 20-21, 8pm, \$15.
safehousearts.org

PUSHfest Dance Festival

ODC Theater, SF

PUSH Dance Company kicks off its fourteenth season with PUSHfest, a mixed genre showcase of dance works by mid-career to emerging choreographers. The season will feature a final installment of the Afro-futuristic *Mothership III* by Artistic Director Raissa Simpson and a world premiere work by guest choreographer Gerald Casel. Local choreographers Yayoi Kambara, David Herrera and Joslynn Mathis Reed join the lineup as well as SF debuts by visiting companies and artists. Fri-Sat, Sep 20-21, 8pm; Sun, Sep 22, 4:30pm & 7:30pm, \$20-\$100.
pushdance.org

Coastal Belly Fest

Veterans Memorial Building, Santa Cruz

Come and enjoy the 4th Annual Coastal Belly Fest. Doors open at 10am for dance workshops, shopping the extensive bazaar, henna tattoo, Festival Dancing all afternoon and a spectacular evening Gala Show featuring the workshop teachers and special guests. Sat, Sep 21, 10am-10pm, \$15-\$155.
coastalbellyfest.com

Hope Mohr Dance's Bridge Project

The Women's Building, SF

HMD's Bridge Project and SFMOMA's Open Space present *INHERITED BODIES: How do movement artists in different traditions contend with, honor, and resist the past?* Featuring a series of lecture demonstrations using language and movement by Sara Shelton Mann, Jarrel Phillips, Nadhi Thekkek, and Snowflake Towers. Following, join Claudia La Rocco, Director of Community Engagement and Editor-in-Chief, SFMOMA's Open Space, for a moderated group discussion. Thu, Sep 26, 6-8pm, **FREE**.
hopemohr.org

Peri Trono

SAFEhouse ARTS, SF

Peri Trono explores space, shape, and order in her new dance work *fold*, inspired by Origami, the art of paper folding. Trono has presented her work in New York, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, and Southern California. Fri-Sat, Sep 27-28, 8pm, \$15-\$20.
safehousearts.org

Vishwa Shanthi

Cubberly Community Center, Palo Alto

Join the inaugural performance of Vishwa Shanthi's new series, *Samarpanam: A Dedication to Art*. Smt. Shreelata Suresh takes the stage to perform Bharatanatyam in its traditional and pure form in an intimate chamber setting for connoisseurs and serious students to enjoy. The one-hour performance will be followed by Q&A with the dancer. Sat, Sep 28, 4-5:30pm, \$30.
vishwashanthi.com

Los Lupeños de San José

School of Arts and Culture, San Jose

The Cashion Cultural Legacy invites you to Los Lupeños de San José's 50th Anniversary Gala Concerts. Under the artistic direction of choreographer Samuel Cortez, experience a deep-dive into distinct regions of México showcasing the past, the present, and the future - all with live musical accompaniment. Over 100 performers will share the stage including Los Lupeños Juvenil, Los Lupeños Legacy, Mariachi de la Bahia, Madrigal Musical, and Ensemble Folklórico de Veracruz. Sat, Sep 28, 8pm; Sun, Sep 29, 2pm, \$20-\$35.
cashionculturallegacy.org

Duniya Dance & Drum Company

Jerry Garcia Amphitheater, SF

The festival will feature traditional performing arts groups representing different regions of Africa and the African diaspora. The lineup will include some of the Bay Area's premier dance companies, including Chinyakare Ensemble, Fua Dia Congo, Duniya Dance and Drum Company, and The Ruth Asawa San Francisco School of the Arts World Music + Dance departments. Sun, Sep 29, 11am-4pm, **FREE**.
duniyadance.com



AXIS Dance Company, Sep 5 / photo by David DeSilva



SUNSET DANCES AND BEING GRATEFUL

by LIZZ ROMAN

MAKING DANCE has always been a mixture of disciplined artistry and gratefulness. As in any practice or skill, there are levels or stages we move through; student, performer, teacher, choreographer, mentor, producer, administrator, but no two of us have the same career. Dance as a career is a big commitment. It costs money to train and to keep our skills sharp, we need to train. To make the money to train or practice, we gotta work and if you don't have a paying dance job, you have to figure out how to work and dance. A dance career can be as rewarding and beautiful as it is frustrating. In essence, we need to dance, so we need other people who need to create, teach or practice dance who need us to dance for or with them. So with every class, performance, or rehearsal I try and practice gratefulness. What I am most grateful for, is all of you who are on a similar journey and how we collectively make up this thing we call the "dance community."

I primarily make site dances. The dance is the sum of the journey we take through a site, creating a visual history of our physical journey through that space that becomes a dance. It is driven mainly by the architecture of the space. I am working with a small community of dancers, musicians, a filmmaker and lighting artist on a collaborative project *SUNSET DANCES II*. The first installation of *SUNSET DANCES*, *Architectural Meditations*, was performed in 2017. This September, the second installation, like the first will take place in my home. When I first decided to create a dance for my home, I wasn't sure I'd find anyone

to work with me. The dreaded Sunset district of the city, where sad people wander through the fog. For me, the Sunset/Ocean Beach neighborhood in San Francisco is beautiful. I am grateful to live so close to the ocean. The Sunset has a microclimate all its own, and just when you think you've figured it out, you haven't. In the course of one three hour rehearsal, dancers would go from sunglasses and sunscreen to wearing coats and hats. So, I am most grateful to the artists who made that trek out to my place for every rehearsal. Thank you.

As we begin the final rehearsals, I am daily reminded of how much I love collaborating with other artists. Without them, I have no art. If I forget this, which I might in a stressful moment, I am guided back by witnessing what we have created. If my confidence wanes, I remind myself that I'm leading a creative community of artists. I've only had five opportunities to work the same site twice in my 25 years of making site specific dances. I really enjoy the challenge of seeing the site with fresh eyes



by DANILLER PHOTOGRAPHY

so it helps to think of Lizz Roman & Dancers as a pick up company, so I don't hold on too tight to my collaborators. Artists have lives outside your project, so it's just more practical to recognize this. To be honest, it's just how it is, so I try to practice being grateful when I get to work with new collaborators. I've learned to embrace the change that comes with each project. *SUNSET DANCES II* is full of repeat collaborators and includes past collaborators coming back in new ways as well as first time collaborators. For this, I am super grateful. It's the beginning of something, the adjustment you make to work with new people, requires seeing what everyone brings to the table, as a new opportunity to explore your site.

In this new site-dance, I welcome back my son Jerome, a musician who has worked with two of my main music collaborators; *WATERSAW* (2012-2018) and Alex Kelly and Clyde Sheets (2004-2010). Thanks for all the beautiful, inspiring music you created for my dances. For *SUNSET DANCES II*, Jerome is leading a band composed of new collaborators, Malcolm Lee (percussion) and Tamsin Black (vocals). The joy of creating art with my son is pretty special. He really loved *SUNSET DANCES I*, so he was excited to join the project and has brought an entirely different sound. His band mate Malcolm brings a joyful energy and beautiful drumming that's extremely infectious. Tamsin is the daughter of a favorite collaborator, Chris Black. Chris's current bio on my website is short and sweet, which says she's been dancing for me for 25 years. She has, and I am grateful to her for taking this journey with me. And then there's always a little bit of sadness with each project as it's often the last time I will work with some of my collaborators. This time around I am saying goodbye to an artist who opened up my work with an entirely new skill set and a kick ass attitude. Sonya Smith, I just love you. Sonya is leaving the Bay Area to run her own Circus School in Ashland, Oregon. What an incredibly generous artist/individual you are. Thank you. As for the rest of my dancer/collaborators, Jaime Nakama, Gizeh Muniz, Colin Epstein, Jenny McAllister, Becky Leviton-Robinson, and Clarissa Ko. Thank you for making art with me.

Then there's filmmaker Pete Litwinowicz, who when I asked him to join me for *SUNSET DANCES I*, wasn't sure he could make a film for my dance. Relieved, I replied, "Whew, that's good, as I actually want you to make a film that is part of my dance". That's where our journey began and this time around, we're enjoying the collaboration on a whole new level. And there's Clyde Sheets, one of those collaborators who is an accomplished artist himself, lighting designer, musician and all around, knows a lot about it, artist. In 2012 Clyde left the Bay Area to return to his home state Michigan. He has landed well, currently gracing Interlochen Arts Academy with his greatness. Clyde comes back to the Bay Area for a handful of local artists who like me, love the mix of skills and confidence he brings to each project. So once again, he will come back and light my dance.

Finally, thanks to Jerry, my partner for the past 32 years. As I finish this dance, I am grateful to you for every building you've cleaned and organized, every prop/structure and bench you've built, every tree and shrub you've cut back, every show you've ushered and for everything else you do that I did not mention.

LIZZ ROMAN and her company have been making dances in San Francisco and the Bay Area since 1995. LR&D are best known for their trademark expansive dances that spring, roll and fly through buildings, resulting in IZZIE awards for Outstanding Achievement in Choreography in 2018 for *SUNSET DANCES* (2017), in 2013 for *DEEPER Architectural Meditation* at CounterPULSE (2012) and Izzie nominations for Outstanding Achievement in Performance-Company for *SUNSET DANCES* (2017) and *CELLGROUND* (2005). The company has developed innovative site-specific techniques to work in unique and commonplace locations with a variety of multi-media collaborators and scenic elements. In 1998, Roman and filmmaker Kevin Cunningham received the SF WEEKLY Black Box Award for Cross Genre Performance for *IN HER DREAMS*. In 2013, Roman was commissioned by Trolley Dances SF and performed *FIFTY FIVE SIX* as part of their 10 year anniversary season.

Lizz Roman and Dancers presents *SUNSET DANCES II*: September 6-22, Home Salon, SF, lizzromandancers.com

PUSH DANCE COMPANY PRESENTS

PUSH *fest*

SEPT. 20-22, 2019
ODC THEATER

PUSHDANCE.ORG/FESTIVAL

TICKETS: \$30 in advance | \$35 at the door | \$20 Student/Senior
\$55 Fast Pass - 2 Programs | \$100 Festival Pass - 4 Programs

PROGRAM A FRI 9/20, 8PM	PROGRAM B SAT 9/21, 8PM	PROGRAM C SUN 9/22, 4:30PM	PROGRAM D SUN 9/22, 7:30PM
Jesselito Bie Julie Crothers Sierra Don David Herrera Raissa Simpson (PUSH) Peri Trono Hannah Young	Gerald Casel (PUSHLab) Cindy Heen Meghan Horowitz Jamal Jackson Yayoi Kambara Nya McCarthy-Brown Joslynn Mathis Reed SNJV	Sierra Don Kathleen Hickey Tony Nguyen Bhumi Patel Andi Salazar Raissa Simpson (PUSH) Jyotsna Vaidee	Gerald Casel (PUSHLab) Kitty Conlon Annie Kahane Tony Nguyen Jennifer Perfilio Mariana Sobral Anupama Srivastava

Photo by Matt Haber



DID YOU KNOW?

Highlighting the Activities of Artists/Organizations in Our Region

BAHIYA MOVEMENT

Bahiya Movement was founded in 2011 by mother/daughter team Afia and Nafi Thompson. Bahiya is a Swahili/Arabic word which means beautiful.

Bahiya Movement's mission is to create a safe, welcoming and body positive environment where everyone of all shapes, sizes, and genders are transformed into performing artists. By offering dance etiquette paired with traditional dance technique, members learn to make beautiful movement all while having lots of fun. Bahiya Movement's vision is to cross and break barriers regarding body image and self-esteem through the art of dance. They believe that body size, type, or gender does not define you as a dancer. Rather, skill, technical training, creativity and love for the art defines the artist.

How did dance enter your lives?

Afia Thompson: Dance started and entered my life when I was in my mother's womb. My mother Pam Thompson danced Traditional Haitian dance under the direction of Blanche Brown. My mother continued her studies of dance for several years with my father Ron Thompson (a percussionist that studied and performed locally in the Bay Area with such greats as Pete Escovedo). My mother then started my Traditional West African dance training with her very good friend Rehema Yenbere in the mid-1980s when I was 10 years old. I studied with Ms. Yenbere for a few more years, then auditioned for Diamano Coura Dance Company with my parents, and we started our journey towards perfecting our craft with Dr. Zakariya and Naomi Diouf. I continued dancing professionally with Diamona Coura and was offered the dance captain position when I was 16 years old. I held that position until I moved to Atlanta, GA with my one-year-old daughter Nafi to pursue my BS in Business Administration. At the age of 18, I taught Traditional West African Dance in the Spelman College Dance Department and was offered to direct their off-campus Ethnic Dance Company from 1995-1998. In 1999, I returned to Oakland to pursue my master's in Human Resources. I also returned to Diamano Coura and stayed until I branched out and founded Bahiya Movement with my daughter Nafi in 2011.

My love for dance became the perfect avenue to help deviate me from becoming a statistic of the Oakland streets. Therefore, dance truly saved my life. Growing up as an inquisitive teen, I experienced obstacles and challenges and without the outlet of dance my life story would have turned out extremely different. I am truly thankful for the way my life has manifested. I am thankful for all the great masters that played an influential part in molding me towards becoming the profound person I am now.

Nafi Thompson: Same as my mother, dance also entered my life when I was still in my mother's womb. My mother Afia continued performing professionally until one month before my arrival. Therefore, the embodiment, love, and passion for dance was instilled in me before birth. My formal dance training started at the tender age of 3 years old in the youth dance program at Spelman College in Atlanta, GA. My mother enrolled me in their tiny tots' ballet and African movement classes in 1996. My mother and I returned to Oakland in 1999, where she enrolled me in Dimension Dance Theatre's Rites of Passage youth program under the direction of Tanya Tigner. I continued with

the Rites of Passage program (perfecting my technique) until I was ready to audition for Dimension Extension Performance Ensemble (DEPE). I auditioned and was accepted into DEPE at the age of 12. Due to my advanced skill level, DEPE accepted me one year sooner than the actual age limit. From my mother's womb until right now, my love for dance continued to affirm that dance will always be a part of my life. Not only did my mother dance, my grandmother and grandfather are artists and they too were an inspiration towards my destiny for dance to encompass all facets of my life.

Describe Bahiya Movement?

Nafi & Afia: Bahiya Movement creates and presents live performances throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, touching upon social issues such as body image, race, and sex trafficking, to name a few. Bahiya Movement has collaborated and produced work for youth companies such as Dance-A-Vision under Carla Service, Destiny Arts Center Youth Dance Company under Sarah Crowell, and Mini Mix'd Youth Dance Company under Jenay *Shinobijaxx* Anolin. Bahiya Movement participated in Ms. Zakiya Harris', a cultural architect, artist and educator, video *abracadabraafrica* in 2016. The company has also presented work at the Oakland Art and Soul Festival, Black Choreographers, Denmark Arts Center in Denmark, Maine, San Francisco Carnaval, and The Palace of Fine Arts, and RAW natural born artist showcase.

We enjoy working with the youth, they are the next generation of dancers. The youth dancers take away great knowledge of the African culture and a better understanding of becoming a professional artist. Most of the work produced for the youth are around social issues such as homelessness, bullying, and self-confidence, and seeing the audience smile and cheering the youth on confirm that we are on the right track towards building a better community one youth at a time.

Bahiya Movement fuses traditional dance styles from across the African Diaspora from Mali, Guinea, Gambia, Senegal, DR Congo, and Liberia, with contemporary Basic Ballet and Modern Jazz, standard Hip-hop, House, Reggaeton from the Caribbean, and freestyle movement.

What are you currently working on?

Nafi & Afia: Bahiya Movement is currently working on two events: *GLO* Artist Showcase supported by SAFEhouse Arts is where Bahiya Movement invites dance, spoken word and visual art artists to submit their work to be considered for Bahiya Movement *GLO* Artist Showcase on November 2, and the second is, Bahiya Movement's 2020 *Believe In Self* emerging artists mentorship program. This is an intensive paid residency that cultivates the artistic growth of artists ages 18-22. Led by mentor artists from the dance community, mentees will work collectively to produce a solo and group performance that includes spoken word, paired with movement.

What's it like to work as mother-daughter duo?

Afia: It's been a delightful journey working, building, creating, and growing with my daughter. My artistic experience with her will be held close to my heart for eternity. We have both learned a lot about each other and continue to deepen our trust day by dancing day. I would not trade this experience for nothing in the world. I started my artist journey with my parents and now with my daughter. We have continued the family tradition of those who dance and build art together, stay together.

My daughter and my dance styles complement each other so well, creating a perfect fusion of Beautiful "Bahiya" Movement.

I enjoy choreographing with Nafi, it's like magic. Over the years we have smoothed out the kinks of our creative process, and now

mind towards, with meditation, a positive outlook on life, and the belief that without a doubt that all is always working out for me.

I am inspired by the great masters - Josephine Baker, Debbie Allen, Alvin Ailey, and Fatima Robinson, to name a few. I am inspired by great out-of-the-box art, art that takes risks, art that is thought-provoking, art that supports the youth, and art that moves you. Art that makes you happy and inspires you to do good in the world and lastly art that makes you simply say 'HMMMM, interesting.'

Nafi: Honestly my mother is my inspiration.

Do you have a favorite song or type of music to dance to?

Afia: My favorite song is "Don't Worry, Be Happy" by Bobby McFerrin. I enjoy dancing



photo by F. Asha Passalacqua

it comes with creative ease, performing and teaching as a dynamic mother-daughter-duo (MDD).

Nafi: Working with my mother has its ups and downs, but I am beyond thankful to be able to share my art and creative styles with her. The best part of performing and/or choreographing is shocking people when they hear that we are a mother and daughter team.

What's a future goal for the company?

Nafi & Afia: The future of Bahiya Movement is to build and sustain our three recently established programs, which are Believe In Self emerging artist mentorship program, *GLO* Artist Showcase, and our yearly *GLO* Movement dance workshops series. Bahiya Movement will continue building social justice work, building community, having fun, and enjoying the art of dance.

Who or what inspires you both?

Afia: My daughter is truly my inspiration. Nafi is amazing - her calmness, level headedness, and openness to be patient and approachable really is a guide for me and others to model after. My parents are also my inspiration. They instilled in me that I have the power to become anything I set my

to all ethnic music, jazz, some country, some alternative, hip-hop, house, reggae, some reggaeton.

Nafi: I love alternative music and house music.

What's a piece of advice that you still hold onto?

Nafi & Afia: Never compare yourself to the next person and always send positive energy and support. Be open to change, appreciate where you came from, where you are currently, and daydream all the time towards your future. Make lots of mistakes, you never get it wrong, and you always have the opportunity to improve.

What haven't we asked that you want people to know?

Nafi: I have a very good impact on the youth. I can connect with them very well and I am able to be a positive role model for them.

Afia: This life is all we have, so make the best of it. Have fun, laugh often, share smiles, give hugs, and inspire each other to be the best we can be. Dance, sing, and love big!

bahiyamovement.com

IN PRACTICE: Meet Talli Jackson

by SIMA BELMAR

I GREW UP in Brooklyn (New York, not Wisconsin; if you think the clarification is unnecessary, you've never been to Wisconsin). And this is what it was like taking dance classes in New York in the summer: Walk five blocks to subway in hazy-hot-and-humid-with-a-high-of-95 weather, wear as little as possible; board freezing train and pile on the layers hidden in dance bag; pray not to hear "We should be moving shortly"; emerge from train into Broadway-Lafayette cauldron—strip; walk a few more blocks to arrive at studio drenched in sweat; barely keep up with the warm-up, for two hours struggle among dancers way more committed and talented than you—more sweating; class ends; walk out onto sultry street to enjoy the sweat that now cools you; descend once more into the fifth circle of hell; board train—sweat turns to icicles, muscles atrophy.

I loved those NYC summer classes but I didn't have the right constitution for it long term. Dancing in the Bay Area was a better fit—cool air, for one thing, and I felt like my questions were welcome rather than signs of my inability to just shut up and dance. Then, as I began writing dance criticism here, I started to hear about the tension between the New York and Bay Area dance communities, a tension felt mostly, it seems, in the Bay. In fact, RAPT Productions' documentary *Artists in Exile: A Story of Modern Dance in San Francisco* (2002) highlights "the marginalization of Bay Area artists due to the New York dance establishment." The film does a wonderful job explaining this sentiment while honoring the contributions of Bay Area artists to the dance field.

Earlier this year, I witnessed the tail end of a master class taught by Talli Jackson. Jackson arrived in the Bay Area in 2018 after ten years with the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company. I recognized the tall, sensual mover from his performance in *Story/Time* (2012) at Zellerbach Hall and was curious about how he came to be in Berkeley, and about what his fresh, newly exiled eyes see here.

Sima Belmar: Give me the quick and dirty version of your life story.

Talli Jackson: I was born in Liberty, NY in 1989.

SB: So it will be a short story. Proceed.

TJ: At 13, I was introduced to The Vanaver Caravan, a wonderful organization based in New Paltz, founded and run by Livia and Bill Vanaver, very inspired by the Denishawn company. They have a passion for bringing different cultural influences into the work they do, particularly their work with children. I had been practicing circus arts for a while, and when I saw my drum teacher walk on stilts, I built myself a pair. The Vanaver Caravan needed a stilt-walker—

SB: —of course. I see those calls all the time—

TJ: —so I ended up doing a gig with them. Then they offered me a scholarship to study at their school. At first I had very little idea of what a life in dance would look like. But early on the Vanavers helped my family find its way to a show by Hubbard Street. Ohad Naharin's *Minus 16* was on the program. I found what they were doing tremendously beautiful.

At 14 I started working with another youth company, Susan Slotnick's *Figures-in-Flight*, also in the New Paltz area. It was an exciting and maybe necessary step to go into a space that called on angst as a legitimate source for creative expression. I stayed with The Vanaver Caravan and *Figures-in-Flight* until I was almost 17. Throughout that time my family lived about an hour and a half drive from where the dance classes and rehearsals were. I don't think my mother particularly liked driving, but I never missed a class or rehearsal because she was sick of doing it. Her devotion made my dancing possible.

After attending the American Dance Festival's six-week school when I was 16, I felt like I needed to step outside of those two environments in order to go further on my particular path, so I auditioned for a fellowship at the Ailey School. When I got in, my parents facilitated my move and then relocated to the Bronx a couple of months later to support my training. I think it's important to say that almost all of my training up to that point was given on scholarship. This is not to say that I was special or uniquely talented, but that other people's support, generosity and belief was what made it possible for me to do what I've been able to do.

SB: How was it to go from New Paltz to NYC, from one summer at ADF to the Ailey School?

TJ: I was doing a lot of dance at ADF so I was prepared in some way for the amount of dancing that it was, 6 days, 15 classes a week, all ballet and Horton except for one jazz class. But the way that their fellowship program works is you get a fellowship for one semester and then you re-audition. And I didn't get it the second time.

SB: A twist in the plot! Were you devastated?

TJ: I wouldn't say that I was devastated but I was disoriented and very disappointed. I had worked quite diligently for that time, getting there early, staying there late, never missing a class except to go on a brief tour with the Vanavers. Afterwards Livia Vanaver connected me with a work study position at Peridance and I started taking class around the city.



Pictured: Talli Jackson/ photo by Eric Politzer

SB: You're still so young at this point.

TJ: Yeah, 17. That year I went to the Bates Dance Festival, did a summer dance program at Steps with Heidi Latsky, and performed at the Holland Dance Festival with the Francesca Harper Project. When I was 18, I went back to ADF, this time in the adult program. When I went I had in my mind that this would either be the moment I'd find the dance company I would aspire to join and orient my training toward, or I'd turn my attention to college and find some other thing.

SB: I'm sensing a turning point!

TJ: Yes—I saw the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company for the first time, in *Serenade/The Proposition*. I thought the dancers were fierce, the vocabulary was articulate, and they had more diversity in that company, racial and of body type, than any other company in the festival. They were bringing together ideas, literature, beautiful speech, and powerful music, and it was everything I wanted to do. In the ADF library I found the documentary Bill Moyers did with Jones on *Still/Here*, and I was struck with an impression of Bill T. as someone with a truly deep and living heart. I decided that was the

company, and the man, I wanted to dance for. I thought if I really focused for about two years, really got my ass in class, then maybe I'd be ready to audition for his company.

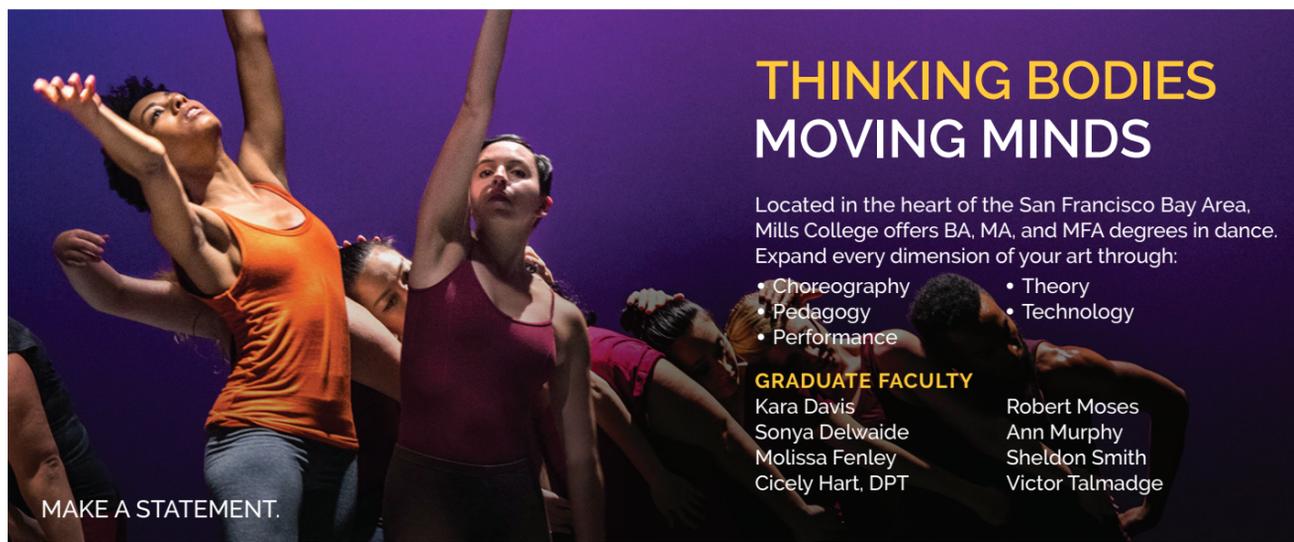
The next day, Janet Wong, the associate artistic director, was teaching a master class. I went in with no sense that anything was at stake—I was just going to have a good time and do my best. Afterwards she came up and asked if I would be interested in apprenticing with the company. At the beginning of 2009 I became a member of the company.

SB: Whirlwind!

TJ: When I was invited to join the company I didn't think I was good enough to be in it, and to a certain extent I wasn't. I wasn't really at the level of the other dancers. When Janet and Bill saw me, they were presented with a choice about whether to take this green, solid bodied, racially ambiguous, young male dancer and try to support and cultivate his development, or to let him go on his way. When they took me on it was a risk, an investment, and a generosity. I worked hard, and it wasn't until about six years later that I felt I was starting to be able to meet the work.

SB: I know you left the company in 2017. Why did you leave and what brought you here?

TJ: When I left, I had been working with the company for about nine years and I wanted to push myself to grow beyond what I had established in the company and in NYC. When I was 16 I started getting involved in Nonviolent Communication (NVC), and at 18 I did the Bay Area Nonviolent Communication leadership program and started making connections with people here. Then, through a different pathway entirely, I met a woman on the east coast, whom I eventually became partners with. She was living out here. And I was hearing about SF as one of the centers of dance in the US, so when it came time to decide where I was going to go, I had my partner here, I had connections here, and there was the possibility of exploring the dance scene here.



THINKING BODIES MOVING MINDS

Located in the heart of the San Francisco Bay Area, Mills College offers BA, MA, and MFA degrees in dance. Expand every dimension of your art through:

- Choreography
- Pedagogy
- Performance
- Theory
- Technology

GRADUATE FACULTY

Kara Davis	Robert Moses
Sonya Delwaide	Ann Murphy
Molissa Fenley	Sheldon Smith
Cicely Hart, DPT	Victor Talmadge

MAKE A STATEMENT.

MILLS

www.mills.edu/dance

SB: So, to address the preamble to this interview, what have you found so far?

TJ: In New York it feels like dance and dancing are tied up with people's sense of survival. Dancers go to New York often to be in companies, to "be" dancers, and do "the great work," whatever that means to them. I'm still new to the scene in the Bay, but I haven't experienced this sort of soul survival tied up in dancing here. It's probably true for people here in different ways, but to me there is an urgency and a hunger that feels different. When young dancers go to New York, I think many of us are asking, "Do I have what it takes?" The Bay Area is no picnic and it has its own questions to wrestle with, but it doesn't seem to me to be a place dancers go to find out whether they "have what it takes."

SB: Can you describe any material differences between teaching or taking class in New York vs. here?

TJ: Terrible overgeneralization: classes in NY tend to be harder—technically harder, longer phrases, longer classes. And people want the hard classes. Something about the culture, the density, the intensity.

SB: I can tell it's hard to talk about. So let me ask you instead: What perspective do you want to offer *In Dance* readers? What would you like them to know about you?

TJ: Right now I'm curious about what I could possibly share of my experience in New York that would feed or spark people here. How can I give the people that are hungry a little more momentum or support for their hunger?

SB: I don't know if this is still true, or if it was ever true, but they say the Bay Area has the largest number of choreographers per capita in the world. Did you choreograph in New York, or did you come here to don that cap?

TJ: In New York I was really focused on my work with Bill's company. I experienced

myself as continuing to train to be good enough to do the work while I was doing it. I didn't have very much time or energy to be focusing on making my own things. Then as I started to settle and felt like I was good enough inside of the work to turn my attention to mine, I started to make solos and would make about a solo a year. I did a couple of group things. I enjoy dancing but my aspiration has always been towards choreography.

One of the reasons why I was so satisfied with being in Bill's company for so

"When they took me on it was a risk, an investment, and a generosity." —TALLI JACKSON

long was because, at the point of the company's history that I was engaged with it, a large proportion of the movement material was being drawn from the dancers through tasks. Another large portion was drawn from phrases Janet Wong would make or she would give a seed phrase and then dancers would manipulate it in various ways. And then Bill might give a phrase or we might draw material from one of his past works into a new piece and either put it in whole or manipulate it. So there was always a process of being creatively involved in shaping what was happening. It was not a choreographer's mind that we were being asked to step into but a material technician's mind, a composer's mind in terms of the language of the movement. And then inside of that we were being conducted by Bill's amazing, richly stocked mind.

SB: So it quenched your choreographic thirst to an extent.

TJ: Yes, but it was not my vision. With choreography, there's a whole right-brained shift where you're half in dream space, trying to convert impressions of emotion and image

into something that can be actually practiced and refined, and we were not asked to do that. But one of the reasons I stayed so long was that being in the company was a master class in creative process.

SB: What have you been up to since you got here?

TJ: I'm preparing the soil. That soil preparation has involved organizing and assisting in NVC trainings, volunteer work, reading, learning what it means and what it takes to be a loving presence in my partner's life, and trying to learn from, without collapsing under, the many failures inherent in the attempt to grow.

SB: But you're teaching dance too.

TJ: Yes. My most consistent teaching has been at ODC in their Hot Spot, but I've also been lucky to have the opportunity to teach at Shawl Anderson, Lines, the Berkeley Rep School, and Marin School for the Arts.

SB: How would you describe your pedagogy?

TJ: The role that I want to play as a teacher is an encourager and instigator, someone who offers a space and a structure that says, Here—don't you just want to step into it and play? I find effort exciting: you sweat a lot and you breathe heavy and your body's working, and you're exploring the edge of what is possible. Isn't it fun to strive and fall and not really know, to just be on the edge of the thing? It's a question of sharing delight.

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 Screen Dance Studies*. To keep up with Sima's writing please subscribe to tinyletter.com/simabelmar.

Building a House of Culture

» Continued from pg 2

Aztec" dance, and I ask him to elaborate on what constitutes Contemporary Aztec.

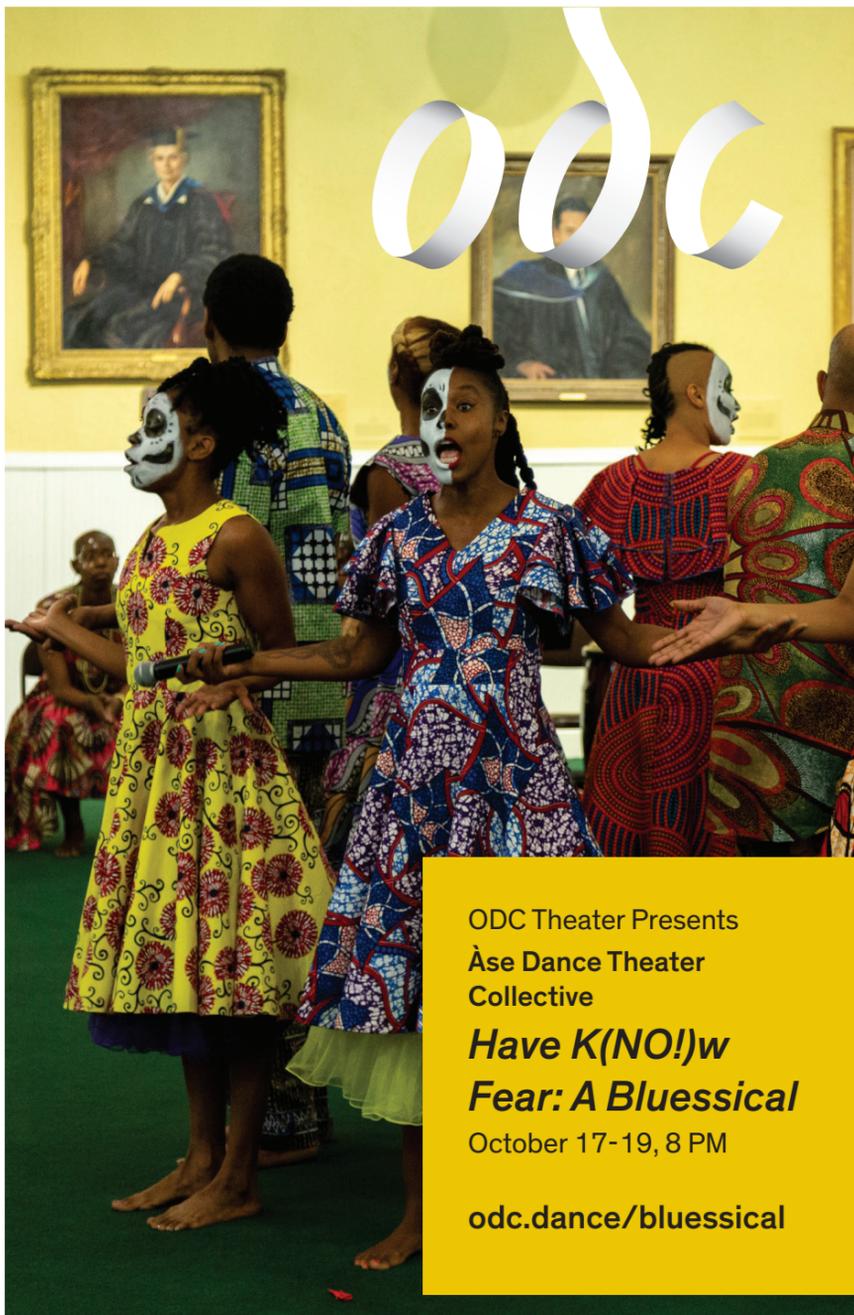
Jesús explains that as a Mexican, he wants to "honor the indigenous cultures, and I feel that when it comes to those dance forms, if we aren't doing them in the sacred spaces, it's almost disrespectful if we do the dance as a ceremony. So, I research all the different aspects of the ceremony and the dancing and from those traditional steps and movements."

He says he creates "new movements based on the movements in an Aztec ceremony, but it's not an Aztec ceremony, and I don't claim that. You can see Aztec dancing in the streets because those groups have elders who form a circle and make it a ceremony. We don't dance in the circle. We are putting on a show, and that makes it Contemporary Aztec. I also ask permission and talk to people and ask them for their advice to make sure I am respecting their culture. It's a challenge for anybody who wants to do it, because you can cross the line very easily, most people won't even notice, but the people who know will always let you know."

We end our conversation by discussing the different staging possibilities available in the Rotunda's space, and as he describes the possibilities, it appears that Jesús is staring into the wall beside us. I know he's seeing a set of movements that will take place in the space of the Rotunda. He is dreaming of what a community looks like coming together in movement.

ROB TAYLOR is a writer who lives in the Bay Area.

Rotunda Dance Series presents
Cuicacalli Dance Company: Sep 6,
City Hall Rotunda, SF
dancersgroup.org/rotunda



ODC Theater Presents
Àse Dance Theater
Collective
Have K(NO!)w
Fear: A Bluesical
October 17-19, 8 PM
odc.dance/bluessical

LUNA DANCE INSTITUTE



workshops to inspire & improve teaching practice

Dance & Early Childhood Education
Dance in TK: Sept. 28, 1-5pm, \$125
Dance in ECE Level 1: Nov. 16, 9:50am-5pm, \$185
Dance in ECE Level 2: Dec. 7th, 9:50am-3:30pm, \$125

Motivation & Creativity Workshop
Examine human motivation theories & their relationship to creativity, cultural relevancy, & social-emotional learning: Oct. 1, 6-9pm, \$75

Documentation: Making Dance Learning Visible
Explore methods of recording & sharing to help you capture, observe, assess, & communicate dance learning
Nov. 12, 6-9pm, \$75

10% Dancers' Group/NDEO/CDEA & 50% Student Discounts
605 Addison St. Berkeley, CA | lunadanceinstitute.org

Mark Morris Dance Group *Mozart Dances*

Berkeley Symphony
 Colin Fowler, *conductor and piano*
 Inon Barnatan, *piano*

More than a decade after its West Coast premiere, Mark Morris' sublime, joyful *Mozart Dances* returns to Zellerbach Hall in its eagerly awaited reprise. Morris' buoyant, exhilarating choreography is set to three exquisite Mozart piano works—the Piano Concerto No. 11 in F major, K. 413; the Sonata for Two Pianos in D major, K. 448; and the Piano Concerto No. 27 in B-flat major, K. 595.

"To hear Mozart through Morris' ears is to appreciate the music in scintillating new detail."

—*The Guardian*, London



Sep 20–22
 ZELLERBACH HALL

Mariinsky Ballet and Orchestra *La Bayadère*

Valery Gergiev, *artistic director*

Music by Ludwig Minkus
 Choreography by Marius Petipa (1877)
 Revised choreography by Vladimir Ponomarev
 and Vakhtang Chabukiani (1941)
 With dances by Konstantin Sergeev
 and Nikolai Zubkovsky
 Libretto by Marius Petipa and Sergei Khudekov
 Set design by Mikhail Sishliannikov after set
 designs by Adolf Kvapp, Konstantin Ivanov,
 Pyotr Lambin, and Orest Allegri
 Costumes by Yevgeny Ponomarev
 Lighting design by Mikhail Sishliannikov

The story of forbidden love and shocking betrayal, complete with a spectral voyage to the afterlife, radiates with colorful characters, opulent sets, and vibrant costumes, performed with the unmatched refinement, dramatic poise, and flawless technique that defines this centuries-old cultural institution.



Oct 30–Nov 3
 ZELLERBACH HALL

Sankai Juku *Meguri: Teeming Sea, Tranquil Land*

Directed, choreographed, and designed
 by Ushio Amagatsu

A majestic stone wall carved with fossils of sea lilies overlooks a sand-dusted stage, where eight dancers from this internationally renowned *butoh* company enter into a sublime dialogue with gravity.

"At its core, each Sankai Juku production draws the audience together with the performers into a powerful human experience."

—*The Seattle Times*



Oct 12 & 13
 ZELLERBACH HALL

Hālau O Kekuhi

Harnessing the force of the mighty volcanoes and the serene beauty of the forests that are their neighbors, the members of this acclaimed and highly respected troupe sing and dance in honor of Pele, the goddess of fire and the creator of their native islands.



Oct 20
 ZELLERBACH HALL

MOMIX Viva MOMIX!

Viva MOMIX! bursts off the stage with a collection of acts from the company's most visually spectacular shows, including *Botanica* (about the seasons), *Lunar Sea* (the moon), and *Opus Cactus* (the landscape of the American Southwest). "A magical dance theater experience" (*Critical Dance*).



Oct 26 & 27
 ZELLERBACH HALL

calperformances.org/tickets

Season
 Sponsor:

WELLS
 FARGO

DANCERS' GROUP Executive Director: Wayne Hazzard, Community Resource Manager: Katie Taylor, Artist Resource Manager: Zoe Donnellycolt, Program Assistant: Andréa Spearman, Bookkeeper: Michele Simon, Design: Sharon Anderson

Dancers' Group gratefully acknowledges the support of Bernard Osher Foundation, California Arts Council, Fleishacker 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.

