

DANCE

Bay Area dance scene bursting with elaborate options this fall

Rachel Howard | September 8, 2021

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Parangal's Jonathan Michael Mercado (left), Dio-Ann Valmores and Darren Garza of San Francisco Trolley Dances.
Photo: Amani Photography

The Bay Area is one of the most important hubs for diverse dance activity in the world, and dance is raring back to life here this fall.

This season we've found more than a dozen significant dance events to keep on your radar. From the rhythms of Indian kathak to the intensity of butoh-inspired movement theater and the tap dance virtuosity of Caleb Teicher, dance is happening. Some performances are online, some are in person, but all are mindful of safety in re-gathering — and bursting with music and movement.

Smuin Contemporary Ballet

The versatile and energetic troupe is honoring company founder Michael Smuin, who died in 2007, by streaming four of his full-length works online, one per week over the course of September. The solemn "Stabat Mater," created in the wake of 9/11, will be followed by three of his whimsical story ballets: "Cyrano," "Pinocchio," and "Zorro!"

Sept. 9-Oct. 4. \$15-\$39. 415-556-5000. smuinballet.org

Leela Dance Collective

Rina Mehta has organized “ReSound,” a series of free street performances and low-cost workshops filling public spaces with the intricate rhythms of the North Indian style of classical dance known as kathak. Mehta, a disciple of the legendary late kathak guru Chitresh Das, plans to showcase some of Das’ original compositions and choreography, in which dancers stamp out ear-teasing musical patterns using bells tied to their ankles, and also act out stories from classic Vedanta texts.

Performances are scheduled to take place on Sept. 17, first in San Francisco’s Union Square at noon and 1:30 p.m., and then on the UC Berkeley campus at 5 p.m. On Sept. 18, the show hits the shores of Oakland’s Lake Merritt at 11:30 a.m. and in San Francisco’s Japantown Peace Plaza at 2:30 p.m.

Sept. 17-18, with additional classes on Sept. 19. Performances free, classes \$10. Full schedule and locations at leela.dance/resound.



Hope Mohr Dance

Hope Mohr, a catalyzer of important dialogue in the last decade with her Bridge Project, is slated to present a world premiere combining — either bizarrely or boldly — the real-world phenomenon of deadly “gender reveal” parties with the ancient Greek play “The Bacchae,” as interpreted by poet and scholar Anne Carson. Co-directed by Mohr and playwright Maxe Crandall, “Bacchae Before” also incorporates puppetry by Mike Chin.

8 p.m. Sept. 28-Oct. 2. \$15-\$75. ODC Theater, 3153 17th St., S.F. www.hopemohr.org/bacchae

Funsch Dance Experience

Doris Humphrey famously proclaimed that “all dances are too long.” Well, San Francisco choreographer Christy Funsch is out to defy her with a 12-hour continuous performance, “Epoch,” unfolding from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

This provocative marathon, incubated over two years, invites audiences to watch some or all of a large-scale spectacle involving 15 dancers and live music from composer Cheryl Leonard.

Viewers can watch in person or via live stream.

10 a.m.-10 p.m. Oct. 2. \$15-\$75. ODC Theater, 3153 17th St., S.F. odc.dance/EPOCH



Clarissa Dyas of “Meet Us Quickly With Your Mercy.”
Photo: RJ Muna

Flyaway Productions

Flyaway director and choreographer Jo Kreiter is scheduled to at last unveil “Meet Us Quickly With Your Mercy,” the second work in an ambitious trilogy about mass incarceration, postponed last year due to the pandemic.

Presented in partnership with the Museum of the African Diaspora, “Meet Us Quickly” sends dancers scaling the facades of CounterPulse theater and the Dahlia Hotel in the Tenderloin, in Kreiter’s signature aerial dance style.

The work’s text is by Rahsaan Thomas, a finalist for the 2020 Pulitzer Prize who is currently serving time in San Quentin.

Oct. 14-17. Free. CounterPulse, 80 Turk St., S.F. counterpulse.org/event/mercy

Chitresh Das Dance Institute

Chitresh Das brought the classical Indian dance known as kathak to California in the 1970s and riveted both audiences and disciples with the form’s sophisticated rhythms and rich storytelling until his untimely death in 2015. The Chitresh Das Dance Institute and leading disciple Charlotte Moraga are carrying his legacy on with “Mantram,” an urgent ensemble work and Moraga’s first full-length choreography, with music by Alam Khan, son of the legendary sarod master Ali Akbar Khan.

8 p.m. Oct. 15-16; 4 p.m. Oct. 17. Live stream, \$10-\$75; in person, \$20-\$45. ODC Theater, 3153 17th St., S.F.
www.odc.dance/Mantram

San Francisco Dance Film Festival

This year’s festival is partially online and partially in person, screening 123 dance films from 25 countries. Among the feature-length selections is the moving and intimate new documentary “Ailey,” about the founder of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and “Can You Bring It: Bill T. Jones and D-Man in the Waters,” about how Jones and Arnie Zane built their groundbreaking company during the ravages of the AIDS epidemic in 1980s New York City. Nine different Screendance Shorts programs include a curation of Bay Area dance films by choreographers working in tango, Afro-Brazilian and modern dance traditions, among many others.

Oct. 15-24. Live stream, \$9-\$60; in person \$15-\$75. Streaming online and at the Brava Theater, 2781 24th St., S.F.
sfdancefilmfest.org



La Mezcla’s Kirsten Millan (left) and Vanessa Sanchez of San Francisco Trolley Dances.
Photo: Amani Photography

San Francisco Trolley Dances

Having waited out the pandemic, this delightful public transit tour of site-specific outdoor performances is back, departing from the Castro Ddistrict to show travelers new works by Babatunji & Charmaine, Epiphany Dance Theater, Joe Landini & Dancers, La Mezcla, Parangal Dance Company and Rising Rhythm.

Ten tours per day are offered starting at 11 a.m., with each tour running two hours.

Oct. 16-17. Free with the purchase of a Muni ticket. Departs from Rikki Streicher Field, 100 Collingwood St., S.F.
epiphanydance.org/san-francisco-trolley-dances

Pilobolus

Cal Performances is re-launching its live dance events with “Big Five-Oh!” presented by Pilobolus, which celebrates 50 years of producing eye-popping effects that blend dance and acrobatics. This program will survey the crowd-pleasing Connecticut troupe’s most popular works.

Oct. 21-22. \$18-\$78. Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley. 510-642-9988. calperformances.org

Axis Dance Company

For 34 years this Oakland-based company, comprising dancers with and without disabilities, has been at the forefront of the national dance field. Recently, the company announced its current director, Marc Brew, is stepping down. But first he contributes a world premiere, “Roots Above Ground,” prompted by Brew’s experience of severe travel restrictions during the pandemic, and by the company’s ongoing work with the East Bay Sanctuary Covenant, which assists immigrants and asylum seekers. There will also be new work by rehearsal director Sonsheree Giles and Choreolab program graduate Neve Kamilah Mazique-Bianco.

Oct. 22-23. Z Space, 450 Florida St., S.F. \$20-\$45. www.axisdance.org

Post:ballet with the Living Earth Show

Robert Dekkers’ innovative Post:ballet is back live in a big way, partnering with musicians the Living Earth Show to produce “Lyra,” a multidisciplinary collaboration that is part of San Francisco Performances’ Pivot Festival.

Dekkers proved himself a visionary producer of dance on film earlier in the pandemic with his industrial-aesthetic “Waltz of the Snowflakes”; here he directs an adventurous team that includes composer Samuel Adams, choreographer Vanessa Thiessen and cinematographer Benjamin Tarquin, who combine visceral music and movement with new spatial sound technologies.

7:30 p.m. Oct. 22; 5 p.m. Oct. 24. \$65. Taube Atrium Theater, 401 Van Ness Ave., fourth floor, S.F. sfperformances.org

Kinetech Arts

Since 2013, Daiane Lopes da Silva’s Kinetech Arts has investigated the relationship between humans and technology in provocative, immersive works. Kinetech’s latest, “Passage,” will combine in-person and virtual performances (with dancers in Chicago) to create an environment of interactive installations for small groups of audiences to explore, with new visitors entering every 30 minutes and remaining for a maximum of one hour.

5-9 p.m. Oct. 23; 2-6 p.m. Oct. 24. In person, \$15-\$50; live stream, \$15-\$50. ODC Theater Studio B, 351 Shotwell St., S.F.
odc.dance/Passage

RawDance

RawDance has emerged as an anchor of the Bay Area dance community, offering online premieres, work-in-progress exchanges and conversations during the pandemic, leading the re-emergence of the Yerba Buena Gardens Choreofest and recently presenting a new work outdoors in Salesforce Park. For fall, it offers “Take 3,” an online dance experience premiering “Shadow (part 1),” a quartet about the internet and identity by co-artistic directors Ryan T. Smith and Wendy Rein, who are based in New York’s Hudson Valley. This is grouped with a repeat showing of “The Healer,” a meditation on traditional Chinese medicine, by RawDance’s third artistic director, based in San Francisco, Katerina Wong.

Live stream, Oct. 29-30. Also available on demand Oct. 29-Nov. 7. \$15-\$100. rawdance.org/events/take-3



InkBoat in collaboration with Ann Carlson

Ann Carlson is a major figure of the New York avant-garde whose dance theater work has sometimes featured actual animals, from a goat to a goldfish to a dog.

InkBoat is a riveting San Francisco collective deeply influenced by the Japanese form of dance known as butoh.

Together, Carlson and inkBoat are creating “These Are the Ones We Fell Among,” meditating on human animality and animal personhood in the face of extinction. Performed by inkBoat founder Shinichi Iova-Koga and wife Dana Iova-Koga, and with music by frequent inkBoat contributor Carla Kihlstedt, this evening promises introspection, absurdity, intensely present performances and catharsis.

8 p.m. Nov. 5-6; 4 p.m. Nov. 7. In person, \$15-\$75; video on demand, \$10-\$75. ODC Theater, 3153 17th St., S.F.

odc.dance/theoneswefellamong

SoulSkin Dance

Adrianna Thompson’s San Francisco-based company presents a dance film created during the early months of the pandemic and a new work-in-progress, “The Awakening,” which the company describes as “part disco celebration and part prayer.”

Nov. 5-6. Live stream and in person, \$25. Dance Mission Theater, 3316 24th St., S.F. dancemissiontheater.org



Ballet Hispanico

Founded by the Puerto Rican/Mexican American choreographer Tina Ramirez in 1970, Ballet Hispanico is a diverse and powerfully athletic New York-based company exploring the Latino experience with new works by a host of international choreographers. For the lauded troupe’s Cal Performances debut, it plans to bring “Batucada Fantastica,” Vicente Nebrada’s celebration of Brazilian Carnival, as well as works by a rising star of the ballet world, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, and Spanish dancemaker Gustavo Ramirez Sansano.

8 p.m. Nov. 6. \$32-\$82. Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley. 510-642-9988. calperformances.org

San Francisco International Hip Hop DanceFest

One of the most important global showcases for hip-hop since 1999, the festival isn’t letting the ongoing pandemic end the worldwide creative exchange. This year the performances will be recorded, with presenter Micaya commissioning world premieres from the Democratic Republic of Congo’s Goma Dance Company, Los Angeles’ Versa-Style, Japan’s dance duo Hilty and Bosch, and companies from London, Las Vegas and of course the Bay Area. Though these companies will be pre-recorded, the festival will host a live watch party with a DJ, food and short live performances.

Nov. 21. Online viewing, \$15; watch party, \$25-\$40. Palace of Fine Arts, 3601 Lyon St., S.F. www.sfhiphopdancefest.com

Kyle Abraham/AIM

Over the last decade, Kyle Abraham has surged to the forefront of the New York dance scene, catapulted by the visceral impact and formal rigor of his 2012 work “Pavement,” inspired by the film “Boyz n the Hood.” In recent seasons, Abraham has been commissioned by Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and New York City Ballet. At Stanford Live, he and his company AIM (Abraham in Motion) are slated to be in residence with electronic musician/composer Jlin, unveiling a new work inspired by Mozart’s Requiem.

Dec. 4. \$15-\$68. Stanford University Memorial Auditorium, 551 Jane Stanford Way, Stanford. 650-724-2464. live.stanford.edu



Caleb Teicher & Company and pianist Conrad Tao will perform the West Coast premiere of “More Forever” on Dec. 5.
Photo: Em Watson / Em Watson

Caleb Teicher & Company

Caleb Teicher, not yet 30, is a rising star of tap, dubbed “the King of Old School Cool” by Dance Magazine. Building on the work of contemporary tap greats Michelle Dorrance (Teicher was an original member of her company) and Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards, Teicher is scheduled to visit Cal Performances with “More Forever.” Think tap means metal clicks and Fred Astaire? This collaboration with composer and live pianist Conrad Tao takes inspiration from the Lindy Hop and presents the company barefoot and dancing in a 24-square-foot sandbox.

3 p.m. Dec. 5. \$32-\$78. Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley. 510-642-9988. calperformances.org



Mark Morris Dance Group is in Berkeley on Dec. 17-19.
Photo: Christopher Duggan

Mark Morris Dance Group

Of all the touring artists most missed during the pandemic, the Mark Morris Dance Group probably ranks high on many peoples’ lists. The exquisitely musical and always movingly down-to-earth company is expected to return to Cal Performances with Morris’ masterwork “V,” a painful but ultimately reassuring interpretation of Robert Schumann’s Piano Quintet in E-flat major. Also on the program is the pop fun of “Dancing Honeymoon” and a duet, “Jenn and Spencer,” to music by Henry Cowell.

8 p.m. Dec. 17-18; 3 p.m. Dec. 19. \$21-\$110. Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley. 510-642-9988. calperformances.org

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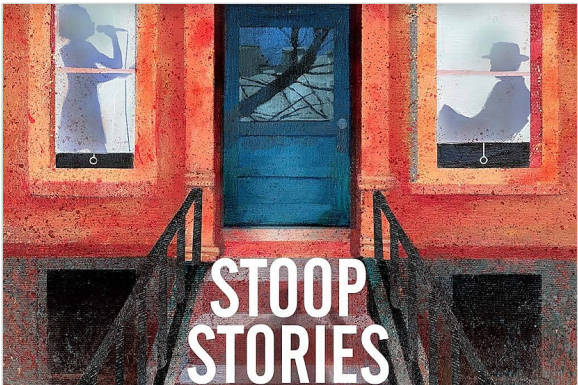
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Rache1 Howard

Rachel Howard is a Bay Area freelance writer

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