

August 17, 2015

## Review: The Battery Dance Festival Evokes Courtship Rituals Amid Flying Hats

By SIOBHAN BURKE AUG. 19, 2015



Battery Dance Festival Yndira Perea, center, and other dancers from Sankofa Danzafo, a troupe from Medellín, Colombia, that made its New York debut at Robert F. Wagner Jr. Park in Battery Park City on Tuesday.

Paula Lobo for The New York Times

The [Battery Dance Festival](#), presented by the Battery Dance Company in Lower Manhattan for 34 years, has become known for its international roster. This year artists from India, Norway and Poland are among those appearing along the Hudson River — routinely backed by stunning, if blinding, sunsets — at Robert F. Wagner Jr. Park in Battery Park City.

Tuesday brought the festival's first-ever South American guests, with the electrifying New York debut of the troupe [Sankofa Danzafo](#) from Medellín, Colombia. It shared an evening of Colombian dance with [Pajarillo Pinta'o](#) Dance Company, a New York troupe founded in Germany by the Limón Dance Company soloist (and Pina Bausch moonlighter) Daniel Fetecua Soto.

## DANCE

magazine

August 11, 2015

### NYC's Battery Dance Festival Kicks Off This Weekend



Battery Dance Festival is one of the few gatherings that present world dance as well as NYC companies. Masterminded by choreographer Jonathan Hollander, it features the Erasing Borders Festival of Indian Dance, as well as groups from Colombia, Italy, Norway and Poland. It takes place August 15 to 21 against the backdrop of the Hudson River in Lower Manhattan's Robert F. Wagner Park.

Battery Dance Company at Robert F. Wagner Park in 2014, photo Darial Sneed

The home-based companies include Hollander's own Battery Dance Company, celebrating its 40th year with a premiere by former Graham dancer Tadej Brdjak. Other local companies include English Dance Theatre, Jennifer Muller/The Works and Tina Croll and Company.

The groups from India in the Erasing Borders series, curated by the Indo-American Arts Council, hail from Mumbai, New Delhi, Kerala and Johannesburg. Battery Dance Festival (formerly known as Downtown Dance Festival) gives audiences a chance to (metaphorically) travel around the world, all in one week.



### 47 wonderful things to do in New York this August



Photograph: Darial Sneed  
Sankofa Danzafo in Battery Dance Festival

### Astonishing Dance Performances

## Dizzying Movement, Dazzling Costumes

Now that the weeklong Battery Dance Festival — an August perennial — has settled on a stage in Robert F. Wagner Jr. Park, it has the best backdrop in New York. The audience sees, behind the dancers, the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. Subtleties, crisscross boats and yachts pass. Aerialists pass silently above. The drawback is that audience members, at 6:30 p.m., have the early-evening sun in their eyes. Baseball caps or dark sunglasses are advised.

This festival is admirably eclectic. This year's includes the New York debut of Polish Dance Theater (Sunday and Monday), an evening of Colombian dance (Tuesday) and — among many others — two world premieres for the first, Battery Dance. One of them is by the former longtime Martha Graham principal dancer Tadej Brdjak. This year's festival began on Saturday with the Indo-American Arts Council's Erasing Borders Festival of Indian Dance, always for me a highlight of the dance year. It was Indian Independence Day. More than a few people were wearing the green, white and saffron colors of the Indian flag.

This year's anthology included five genres: the enigmatic Punjabi folk form Bhangra; the elaborately expressive folk form Chhau (from the eastern state of Odisha); and three of the nation's classical idioms — Mohiniyattam (from Kerala, in the southwest), Bharatanatyam (from Tamil Nadu, in the southeast) and Kathak (from the north, originally from the courts). The most unusual to Western eyes were the two examples of Chhau, performed by Rakesh Sai Babu. A further ingredient for curiosity



Rakesh Sai Babu danced two numbers of the folk form Chhau.



Erasing Borders Festival of Indian Dance  
Robert F. Wagner Jr. Park

for the upper and lower body, sometimes asking dancers to hold a balance when they must be most tired. He performed both of his numbers bare-chested and hairless, in billowing leggings and with the ankle-bells that appear in many Indian dance forms.

His first piece, "Duality," demonstrated the reconstruction of the wandering ascetic, "Yogi," the second, was a martial-arts number deriving from the royal court of Mayurbhanj.

In both, he was asking how full-bodied his dancing was. As the ascetic, he arched all the way back and sideways, his martial dance was accompanied by memorable shakes of the shoulders. His legs siked out, in and out again, turning back and striking into rhythmically detailed poses. My chief reservations about these examples of Chhau regarded the coarseness of their music: bawling drums and drumming pipes. The most transporting dances of the program were the three by the Kathak performer Sanjivita Wagh (from Mumbai). As she showed, Kathak is characterized by dizzyingly intricate footwork and many turns, but its subtleties were yet more beautiful.

Ms. Wagh would end a dance — The Battery Dance Festival continues through Friday at various locations in Manhattan; batterydance.org.

not just with a sudden halt (as occurs in all Kathak) but as if she were switching into an excerpt at a form of repose. During one number, she knelt on the floor and slowly lowered her hands onto her legs so that all you looked at was her marvelous expression of contemplation. I'd love to see her with live music; with no Indian dance forms does the responsiveness of music and movement become more enthralling than with Kathak.

Moving at high speed, spinning around the stage, she never for a moment lost elegance. And she showed how Kathak makes rhythmic effects with arms, wrists and eyes, as well as with feet. In her final number, "Thamir," she performed in Kathak, expressing aspects of the eternal love of Radha for Krishna, her costume — a full-length, richly red dress topped by a stingingly green veil — was the most ravishing outfit of the evening.

I also loved the Mohiniyattam dancing of Pallavi Krishna (from Thrissur, Kerala). It's well known that Mohiniyattam is characterized by sensuous side-to-side or circular swaying of the dancer's torso, but Ms. Krishna proved a sophisticated stylist who showed many further points of the genre: wide the knees and thighs are propelling the torso to tilt one way; the bare feet are pounding out an intricate rhythm. The hands and arms, meanwhile, are communicative. Phrases are long and connected;

you follow the dance as if borne downstream on a shifting current.

The green and purple costumes of Sankofa Danzafo and her four Jiva Dance co-performers (from New York) distracted the peacock. (I had not known until Saturday that this is India's national bird.) The interplay of the sculptural and rhythmic aspects of Indian dance was compelling here. Among many fine points, the facing of individual fingers — always remarkable in the dance forms of Southeast Asia — was anywhere else — was riveting.

New York also provided the closing performance, a Bhangra number delivered by the five women of Shaan Motyaranan Di Bhangra. The high energy of this folk genre was originally associated with Punjab, but, as has been occurring in recent decades across the terrain of Indian dance, women have felt free to invade it. These five were each dressed in a different bright color; although this was the program's brief subtitle, too, as powerful poses, as merrily outgoing force and its occasional jump made it a winning finale.

## NEW YORK

August 10, 2015



AUGUST 12-26

## 15. See Battery Dance Festival

Movers and shakers from near and far.

Robert F. Wagner Jr. Park, August 15 through 20.

Forty years ago, the Battery Dance Company got its start performing in the city's parks, plazas, and piers. It's still showcasing local talent at this annual outdoor celebration, which is also one of the best places to catch smaller international troupes; this year's festival starts with a celebration of Indian dance and continues with groups from Poland, Norway, and beyond.

REBECCA MILZOFF

## The New York Times

August 14, 2015

DANCE

### Battery Dance Festival Offers World and Harbor Views

By JACK ANDERSON AUG. 12, 2015



Ballet Nao will perform "Fellini's Dream" at the Battery Dance Festival. Stephen Deane Hines

The Battery Dance Festival, which runs from Aug. 15-21, offers a panoramic view of world dance on an outdoor stage with panoramic views of New York harbor. On Monday night the Polish Dance Theater makes its American debut with Takako Matsuda's "Thousand Colors" and "It's Already Dusk," in which Ewa Wychodowska, the company's director, depicts a symbolic contest between life and death. (It's inspired by Ingmar Bergman, death, on stilts, looms above everyone.) Enzo Celli and Elisabetta Minutoli's "Zantón," for Mr. Celli's Rome-based VIVO Ballet, takes its title from an ancient Greek word for "living." Although Kate Thomas's Ballet Nao is a New York group, her "Fellini's Dream" evokes the sentimental and grotesque Italy imagined by the film director Federico Fellini. It's all free, views included. (6:30 p.m., Robert F. Wagner Jr. Park, Battery City, 212-219-3910)