To Become Another Being

At the current one-week Drive East festival of Indian dance and music at La MaMa, each artist or group has just one performance. Several of the performers are taking lessons. You just have to go along, take a риск and learn from them all. It is almost certain that the quality is high, the styles are varied. Some of the music has been even better than the dance — perhaps because almost all of the dance has been to taped music, whereas the recitals by instrumentalists, soloists and singers have filled the act of music-making with delight and immediacy.

Even so, the dance has brought many moments of revelation. Among the marvels of most forms of Indian classical dance is the way in which a single dancer or a group of dancers, or a series of characters on the stage, can bring out the character of another character. Although English-speaking audiences are usually told who the characters are and how their stories will unfold, it is not as clear as it can be. — and yet that precisely matters when the dancing begins.

The performers don’t so much exact a narrative as give it a series of illustrations, and the vivid, seamless way in which they shuffle between feelings and temperaments takes us deep into the mystery of acting and identity. Opera people often — and rightly — remark on the marvelous film of the soprano Maria Callas in concert; they show us the very moment when her entire face suddenly changes from the character she is about to sing. It feels miraculous. Yet such moments keep recurring during

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Drive East: Suryakantika Kuri in the Smiths-Rujan & Company, performing as part of this festival at La MaMa.
To Become Another Being in the Art of Indian Dance

individual Indian dances: the face changes contour; the body becomes another being.

Smita Rajan is not one of the great beauties of Indian dance, but when this Wednesday night could have taken their eyes off her for a second? Her very eyebrows vibrate, the corners of her mouth quiver, and the constantly changing life of her eyes command attention. This acting isn't confined to her face; her whole breathing and stance are involved, and I was startled to notice on several occasions the force with which she threw her pelvis into various points of emphasis. And this is musical acting, phrased to its accomplishment with ligato.

Ms. Rajan, though she lives in Missis- gipi, practiced the Mohiniattam style from the south- western Indian state Kerala; she has practiced this for over three decades, having first learned it from her mother, Swetha Rajan, and having first performed it at 6. She brought with her three young female students; all were dressed in white and gold.

The lancet adjective for Mohiniattam dance are "sway- ing" and "circular"; you can see why. These women continually swing their arms from side to side, giving a powerful and sensuous lift to the dance; they travel around the stage in arcs, sometimes in full circles.

There isn't the metric complexity of Bharata natyam (the classical genre of India's southeastern state Tamil Nadu), but in one solo the curvaceous intricacy of Ms. Rajan's dance became a gorgeous overlay of 3-betts from side to side, from knee to shoulder, from hip to hand.

And until this recital I had not known Mohiniattam's potential for dramatic expression. In monologue, Ms. Rajan's moment switched from anger to grief, from laughter to tenderness, from nremony to adoration.

Her students performed a little story about the young Lord Krishna with spindoes and charm. The story concerns how he, playing as a boy, stuffed his mouth with mud. His brother reported his naughty antics to their mother, but when she demanded to see inside, he marveled to see that it remained the wishes of a whole wardrobe, and she fell away to the floor.

What was delectable was the concision and fragmenting with which the tale was told. At times, as in some Western Renaissance paintings, we saw different versions of the story occurring simultaneously or different parts of the stage. But the dance did not lack each other in the eye — so that Krishna's mother looked not directly at Krishna but instead showed us the act of looking at him.

Similar elements of fast-changing expression were to be found in the two Bharata natyam taleans of Anjali Chande and Ramya Ramamurthy on Thursday evening. The same play is on a stage.

Ramya Ramamurthy, top with her son Rangaraj Tirumalai performing in the Bharata natyam style of Indian dance as part of the Drive East festival at La MaMa. Above, Smita Rajan & Company members perform in the Mohiniattam style at La MaMa.

wonderfully fresh and lovely face, is a gifted stylist, but her material, though accompanied by philosophical statements about nature and empowerment, tends to be swiftly bland. Ms. Ramamurthy, who performed with her son Rangaraj Tirumalai, delivered a far wider selection of the physical, rhythmic and communicative range of her idiom. Mr. Tirumalai, in spite of all that, has presence but no yet stylistic confidence; there is a tension in the way he holds his body that holds him back. The sides of Ms. Ramamurthy's smaller feet often slapped the floor with greater impact than his, and her rhythm had terrific authority.

To study most of the Indian arts is to ponder about the many East-West cross-pollinations that must have occurred over the centuries — some perhaps going back to Alexander the Great's invasion of the Indian subcontinent. Seeing these dances the week after the New York performances of Malvinder Mors's "Acts of Galatea," I realized that Mr. Mors's use of gestural motifs takes much from the dances of India, a country he has represen-

tedly visited. I wonder anew about the absorption of Merce Cunningham in the styles and philosophies of India from the 1940s on, some of which is still coming in lights.

There are surprisingly numerous ballets by Frederick Ashton (from "The Wise Virgin" to the "Romeo" version of the "Romeo" containing features of line and gesture that seem specifically Indian, several of Balanchine's "Hotel Procope" and "La Fille Mal Gardée" come remarkably close to the abhaya, expressive acting, of Indian dance tradition. Who knows who influenced whom and when? Meanwhile, each Indian dance abounds in distinctly non-Western points that enrich our minds and senses.

It's curious how much Indian dance is reaching New York and other American cities. From Sunday to Thursday, the Battery Dance Company presents its annual Downtown Dance Festival. As happens every year, one day of this — Wednesday — will consist solely of the Spring Border Festival of Indian Dance, an event in which I've always delighted from which I've learned much. Several classical styles of Kathak, Kathakali, Kuchipudi, Manipuri, Odissi, Satyakumar will be shown. The Battery Dance festival held this year from 6 to 8 p.m. each day in Robert W. Wagner Park, also showcases an admirably catholic selection of other dance styles, from the Vaisnavite Caravan's tribute to Pete Seeger to the American debut of the Romanian company "Tangul Dance."
Five New York-based dancers and South African choreographer Theo Ndindwa gathered in Downtown Manhattan on a recent afternoon. They were rehearsing one of Ndindwa's pieces, which he described as something like a wave. “When it crashes it doesn't just crash and stop; it crashes and sort of morphs into something else.”

Ndindwa's piece will premiere at the Downtown Dance Festival, an outdoor free event starting on Sunday. The festival is in its 33rd edition and this year it will include 13 dance companies from around the world.

“We wanna have a festival where there is a certain sense of surprise and serendipity in terms of what you are gonna find,” said Jonathan Hollander, artistic director and founder of Battery Dance Company, which runs the festival.

The five day event takes place at the Robert F. Wagner Jr. Park, located at the north end of Battery Park. The program will open with the “Vanaver Caravan,” a dance company with musicians and dancers from the Hudson Valley performing a tribute to late folk hero Pete Seeger.

Other companies participating include Entomo from Spain, Tangaj Dance from Romania, the Lori Belilove and The Isadora Duncan Dance Company and the Buglisi Dance Theatre. On Wednesday Aug. 20, the program will include several forms of Indian dance in a show curated by the Indo-American Arts Council.

All performances will take place in the evenings from 6 to 8 p.m.
In its 33rd year, the Downtown Dance Festival has a new viewpoint, at least physically. Its free outdoor performances have moved into Robert F. Wagner Jr. Park at the bottom tip of Manhattan. The temporary stage is backed by the harbor, passing ships, Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty. As the sun sank through the opening show early Sunday evening, it all looked postcard perfect.

Alas, the programming for this year’s festival comes from the same old point of view: unfocused, as undiscriminating as Lady Liberty is supposed to be. Mixed bills need not have binding themes, but, ideally, the participants should share something other than mediocrity. On Sunday, a theme of Americana, appropriate for the setting, coursed through some selections by the program’s four companies. So did a penchant for literalism. But as in previous years, any moments of distinction felt inadvertent.

The Vanaver Caravan opened with a tribute to the folk musician and activist Pete Seeger, who died in January. The troupe revived excerpts from “Turn, Turn, Turn,” a 1996 collaboration with Seeger, and the ramshackle level of the dancing and the musical accompaniment suggested that the revival could use more rehearsal. But even if polished, the material would still be earnest and bland, mainly illustrations of the lyrics padded with gamboiling and some sloppy clog-dancing, all smiles and no bite.

Like these songs, this amateur-theatricals choreography can find strength in simplicity, as it did in the staging of Seeger’s “Where Have All the Flowers Gone,” which doggedly matched the lyrics, verse by verse. Girls in dresses looked for flowers, found husbands, watched the men go to war. When the girls looked for flowers again, it was in a graveyard, and the repetition brought out the feeling in the song’s form. It was as sentimental as a sunset, but just as affecting.

Next came Adam H. Weinert and Logan Frances Kruger doing their own revival of choreography from the early 1930s by the modern dance pioneers Ted Shawn and Doris Humphrey. There was literalism and doggedness here, too. Shawn’s “Four Solos Based on American Folk Music,” though more distilled and shaped than the previous dances, were equally bloodless. Humphrey’s “Two Ecstatic Themes” solos were schematic: a spiraling down, a rising up. Yet with strong performances, Mr. Weinert and Ms. Kruger made a case for more than historical interest.

Annmaria Mazzini, who retired from the Paul Taylor Dance Company in 2011, is a dancer of great passion, and it was good to see her back onstage. Her company, Mazzini Dance Collective, performed works by her and her fellow Taylor

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/19/arts/dance/downtown-dance-festivals-echoes-of-pete-seeger.html?_r=0
alum Orion Duckstein that were faded copies typical of Taylor offshoots. To an Édith Piaf song about going insane, Ms. Mazzini pretended to go insane. Her ensemble choreography to Robert Paterson’s “The Thin Ice of Your Fragile Mind” featured a woman who beat on her own head and was harassed by mean girls. Though unsubtle and static in concept, the piece had a quirky tone that made it refreshing amid this program’s earnestness.

The festival’s host troupe, Battery Dance Company, debuted a work (so new it didn’t yet have a title) by the visiting South African choreographer Theo Ndindwa. This was neither Americana nor in the lineage of American modern dance. It was simply undistinguished contemporary dance, far less striking than the setting.
In its new location at the bottom tip of Manhattan, the Downtown Dance Festival has a lovely view of the harbor. But its new showtime, 6 p.m., means that viewers gaze not only into sea and sky, but also directly into the setting sun. There was little on the festival’s first two programs to match the blissful relief when a cloud temporarily intervened.

Still, the setting was a fine one for Monday’s opening act: Lori Belilove & the Isadora Duncan Dance Company. The company performed more than a dozen bits of reconstructed Duncan, and the hyperbolic statements by and about her that threaded through them had the unfortunate effect of underlining the distance between us and the era, more than a century ago, when her art inspired shock and awe. But the line about a time “when movements of human bodies were one with the wind and sea” felt close to an observation of fact.

Barefoot young women skipping and leaping in wispy Botticellian tunics blown about by the breeze — this was a pleasing sight, even if successive solos to Chopin or Gluck began to seem interchangeably quaint. The “Dance of the Furies,”
clawing the air, lacked whatever Dionysian terror it might have once had, but Ms. Belilove hinted at Duncan’s tragic force as a grieving mother, and her company shared a charming camaraderie.

“Entomo,” by the Spanish duo of Elías Aguirre and Álvaro Esteban, was also suited to the outdoors. According to the program note, it was a kind of entomological study, and much of the detailed, twitchy movement did read as insect behavior, though on human bodies, much of the crouching and springing looked simian. The duet was antagonistic, with the two men grappling for dominance, but their attitude was cool, and a looseness in structure and energy gave the work a sketchlike quality.

Elena Zahlmann of New York Theater Ballet danced “An Eccentric Beauty Revisited,” a curio that James Waring made in 1972, looking back at the Belle Époque and Nijinsky. The work mystified me when I first saw Ms. Zahlmann perform it in 2012, and revisiting it on Monday, I still found it more eccentric than beautiful, and not exaggerated enough for camp. The carnivalesque costume is striking, but I don’t understand the point of the piece’s collage of fussy ballet steps and jokey gestures. (Neither did the kid who yelled out, “Yay, funky chicken!”)

“Danzon,” which the former Ballet Hispanico dancer Pedro Ruiz created for Nimbus Dance Works in 2011, is like Ballet Hispanico pieces of old: handsome, lively, artistically unadventurous. The Nimbus dancers struggled too much with the choreography for its ballroom duets with pointed toes to yield their full pleasures, but the dancers, all in white with flashes of bold color on the undersides of the women’s skirts, did make another pretty picture as the sun set: not a blinding vision, but a pleasant one on an evening in August.
At the Downtown Dance Festival: graceful dancers and a gorgeous view

By Robert Johnson

Perhaps only one thing could improve the view in Robert F. Wagner Jr. Park, in Lower Manhattan, where the annual Downtown Dance Festival opened on Sunday.

That would be the sight of graceful dancers, their figures silhouetted against the sky.

Here a spectacular panorama takes in the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island and the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge. Ferries and sailboats plough through the waves of New York harbor; while the evening sun tints the clouds in shining watercolor hues. When the dancers begin to move, however, they instantly steal our attention.

The first of this summer’s free programs sponsored by Jonathan Hollander’s Battery Dance Company featured an intriguing mix of old and new works, and some classic Americana. The Vanaver Caravan, from New Paltz NY, specializes in preserving folk traditions. Their rollicking dances opened the show, while a live ensemble that included fiddlers and a banjo picker kept time with spine-tingling ballads that recalled folk-music legends Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie. Recordings of “Old Time Religion” and “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” joined the mix when Adam H. Weinert and Logan Frances Kruger, co-directors of In Situ Arts, performed a fascinating medley of 20th-century dance revivals including “Four Solos Based on American Folk Music” by Ted Shawn.

New pieces choreographed by Annmaria Mazzini and Orion Duckstein for her Mazzini Dance Collective made the point that today’s young artists are still working in the feisty, independent tradition of our modern dance pioneers. To conclude, Battery Dance presented a fresh-out-of-the-studio and still untitled premiere by guest choreographer Theo Ndindwa. That piece is the only one to be repeated this week, as the Downtown Dance Festival continues with a lineup that includes hot-shot tapper Michelle Dorrance and her company, Dorrance Dance, on Tuesday, and incorporates the Erasing Borders Festival of classical Indian dance on Wednesday.

Nostalgia is the old-fashioned tool the Vanaver Caravan uses to pry open hearts. While viewers may admire the skill of a dancer like Joel Hanna, who performs an Irish step dance lickety-split, virtuosity isn’t as important here as the spirit of a multi-generational hoe-down that turns into a march for labor unions with additional pleas for environmental conservation and an end to war. Yet the Vanaver Caravan delivers its messages in a friendly, unpretentious style.

Livia Vanaver makes a winsome activist, clogging and carrying a picket sign; and, though you may not have heard Seeger’s “Where Have All the Flowers Gone” in a while, sadly the image of young women tending soldiers’ graves is as relevant today as ever.

Preserving America’s dance heritage is another urgent and complicated matter. While the formal
brilliance of José Limón’s “Choreographic Offering” and Doris Humphrey’s “Two Ecstatic Themes” continues to make these works arresting. Shawn’s “Folk Music” solos demand interpretive power. For all his sincerity, Weinert doesn’t quite pull them off.

Mazzini, on the other hand, has what it takes to sell a song by Edith Piaf, her gestures piercing and her doughty figure trembling and rolling with the music of “Cet Air.” Mazzini’s gift for characterization extends to choreography, too. In her mini-psychodrama “Company,” the eloquent Rachel Holmes takes Megan Cohl’s hand and gently tries to share a vision with her, but Cohl falters when demons come to claim her.

Ndindwa’s balletic premiere has clarity in its favor, but its loose articulations and meanderings are hopelessly shopworn. If America’s dance pioneers have one thing to teach, it’s this: first, discover yourself.
For decades the Downtown Dance Festival (until Thursday) served to illustrate a puzzling New York phenomenon: despite the abundant example of extraordinary art, a parallel universe of junk persists. But when the excellent Erasing Borders Festival of Indian Dance appeared under Downtown’s auspices, I thought maybe I had misjudged. No. After a couple of years of dogged attendance, I can confidently report that the gems are the accident. So is any organising principle among the acts. But on opening night as we faced out towards the Statue of Liberty, a fitting theme emerged – Americana – along with an object lesson in the difference between the derivative and the original.

The two-hour show began with Vanaver Caravan’s tribute to its Hudson Valley neighbour, the late Pete Seeger. It was half the tribute he deserved – the bad half. This admirable activist-singer did not just unearth folk songs, he also encouraged his audience in their righteous sentiments. The tunes may have often sprung from the people, but they were not meant to make Americans look to their roots so much as to urge them forward, in rallies and marches. Stripped of political purpose and amplified by simple-minded pantomime – for the seasons “turning” the Vanaver dancers turned – the ditties had only affect to offer: an earnestness now entirely cloying.

Mid-century modern dance pioneers Ted Shawn and Doris Humphrey were earnest too, but in evident service to their young art. His Four Solos Based on American Folk Music and her Two Ecstatic Themes, both from the 1930s, merge physical idea and spiritual or cultural mood. A dance to shrugging shoulders features hands in pockets à la Huck Finn. An ode to love centres strangely yet persuasively on the ribs. Adam Weinert and Logan Frances Kruger made the work’s probing eccentricity riveting.

At the Museum of Modern Art until September 5, films of Weinert and Shawn dancing the solos decades apart appear on designated patches of museum wall when you point your smartphone there. While Vanaver sings of unions and reliable seasons, Weinert’s Reaccession of Ted Shawn inserts the present into the picture. In its first decades, modern dance was intent on distilling gesture into symbol. Weinert offers as a contemporary equivalent the convergence, via us and our ever present phones, of the here and now and the placeless and ghostly.

http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/2/8da81556-278d-11e4-ae44-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3EoXQKN00
Erasing Borders, Downtown Dance Festival, New York – review

By Apollinaire Scherr

This showcase of Indian dance revealed the contrasts and affinities between the classical styles

For the final number in Erasing Borders’ outdoor show (the indoor edition takes place on September 5-6), Srishti Dance of India divided the stage not only between bharata natyam and odissi dancers but between praying and fighting, praising Vishnu and becoming him in all his avenging fury. Worshipper and worshipped, mortal and god, rite and drama: this brilliantly curated event amply confirmed that Indian classical dance proceeds by complement and contrast, if not within each of its eight idioms – every one of which was represented here – then between them.

In a particularly lovely rendition of the invocation to the elephant god Ganesh, kuchipudi practitioner Yamini Saripalli suggested the trunk’s swing by loosely lifting her leg, and its finger-like grasp by keeping one hand closed like a bud. She conveyed the elephant’s girth and gentleness with swaying, sideways steps, and his massive feet with heel-toe stamps. And yet she would periodically interrupt the rhythmic dancing to press her palms together in prayer to
the figure she had just embodied, then stretch her arms toward us as if to say, “Look what
bounty he has given me: you.” We were her pious reward – devotees of Ganesh by way of her
art.

Indian classical dance blurs as many distinctions as it makes. Women typically perform the male
deities, whom they endow with feminine graces. Sprightly manipuri soloist Noopur Singha
evoked Krishna with lilting jumps and twirls, and sattriya master Anita Sharma did so with
sinuous arms.

The women characters played by males in kathakali epic drama, on the other hand, move with
virile solidity and commanding slowness. So with Prabal Gupta’s mesmerising Lady Macbeth, an
inspired choice for kathakali, as Shakespeare casts suspicion on her status as a woman. She is
wrung of the “milk of human kindness”, though is enough of an Eve to know that her husband
should proceed by dissembling: “look like the innocent flower/But be the serpent under ’t.”

The stocky Gupta’s stance was wide as a cowboy’s. His steps were heavy with deliberation: no
bounce, no spring, falling like stones. After Lady Macbeth whispered poison in her husband’s
ear, however, Gupta became still and impassive, wrists emphatically limp as she waited for her
husband to act. Now she was more inscrutable ornament than forthright agent, with only her
demented gaze betraying any life.
Thursday 21

* FREE Downtown Dance Festival Robert F. Wagner Park, Battery Pl between West St and 1st Pl (batterydance.org/ddf_festival.htm). Subway: 1 to Rector St; 4, 5 to Bowling Green. 6, 7pm. Battery Dance Company offers its 33rd annual festival. The five-day series ends tonight with Entomo EA&AE and Tangaj Dance (6pm), Battery Dance Company, presenting choreography by Theo Ndindwa (7pm) and an open dance party (7:45pm).
DOWNTOWN DANCE FESTIVAL
The outdoor festival concludes with a performance by Battery Dance Company. ➤ Robert F. Wagner Park; Thu 21
In Praise of Hindu Gods, With Sharp Turns and Barefoot Rhythms

Krishna was evoked, Ganesh was praised, the deities of Vishnu were illustrated, seven of the eight classical dance forms of India were demonstrated — and the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island were on the horizon throughout. Passers-by runners and cyclists slowed down to gape at the costumes, steps and gestures. Every yachts in the harbor were in their course to get a better view.

Because the Baryshnikov Company always gives one day of its Downtown Dance Festival to the Erasing Borders Festival of Indian Dance (which is organized by the India-Americana Arts Council), the juxtaposition of the South Asian dances and the outdoor spaces of Lower Manhattan has become an August tradition. And since the Downtown Festival this year is taking place close to the harbor in Robert F. Wagner Jr. Park, the setting ought to be more tourist-perfect than ever before.

On Wednesday, only in the second half of the Erasing Borders Festival did the magic start. Because the performance started at 9 p.m., the first hour was marred by overly bright sunlight behind the dancers. To some degree, the performers were turned into silhouettes; it was hard to make out details of eyes and gestures. The runners, cyclists and yachtsmen — watching from behind — had the better view. The turning point came with the fourth of the program's six acts — a dance in the Kathak style by Sarasvati Dixit.

Ms. Dixit is more at home with the relaxed, gentle style of Kathak. Because, with her back to the audience, she opened her arms gracefully to address the harbor itself. (My view was cut off by the fence.) When she moved, Marcey Cusumano produced a pervading impression of her new "Five Shores" in an open-air plaza at the World Financial Center. In no time, she became the most virtuosic at the Shakti Dance Company. In the Kathak, she moved with grace, grace and fluidity.

Ms. Dixit, barefooted, was dressed in a gleaming shade of deep pink. Dancing to taped music, she almost immediately went into one of the series of rapid single turns of the Kathak. Kathak specialty, dandiya itself allows them to the notorious 331-foot diameter of ballet. She, because of their more persuasive nature and especially the exciting stature with which they used. Jumma were another feature of Ms. Dixit's role, and those — bent-fingered but loose — made a particular impression in this open-air space. For the passages of pressed footwork, she advanced (or Steh for the footwork) on the farthest part of the stage, so that the shapely form of her feet on the floor became part of the scene, to top dance. It's fascinating how Kathak takes these various aspects of virtuosity and weaves them into a larger elegance of style; some of the most memorable features of Ms. Dixit's dancing were those in which she bent in profile to the audience and swiftly arched her back and upheld her body. A sudden change in pace, the dance moved into a more lyrical movement, and Ms. Dixit's feet became part of the dance.

Magic of a different kind came simply when the stage-side lighting — gentle — was switched on for the final two stages: a Sattriya number and one combining the Odissi and Bharatanatyam genres. Costumes and jewelry in Indian dance always make an impact, but near the way in which certain fabrics, gems, metals caught the light was sensational. At the start of the program, performers had been dim shapes before the shining sky and harbor; but now, it was the dancers who shined. I hope one day to see examples of Sattriya (from Assam) alone. It is one of the many dances of the Satyag Health Dance Company, the only show to appear both the in Erasing Borders Festival and the last week's Delhi East Festival of Indian dance at La MaMa. The dancers were more joined in and musically exact on Wednesday than they had been on Saturday, and the various elements, golds and greys of their apparel coalesced. It meant more beautifully. Still, I'm disappointed by the ana-
Erasing Borders Festival of Indian Dance
This free showcase, tucked into the weeklong Downtown Dance Festival, has heretofore been a midday affair, but this year it shifts to dusk and a new location, one that trades the usual contrast between sinuous bodies and skyscrapers for one between subcontinental forms and the Statue of Liberty. The diverse program includes exponents not only of the Kathak and Odissi traditions but also of the rarer Kathakali, Manipuri, and Sattriya styles. (Robert F. Wagner, Jr., Park, 20 Battery Park Pl. 212-219-3910. Aug. 20 at 6.)
Festival
With Sunset
And Harbor
As Backdrop

In its 33rd year, the Downtown Dance Festival has a new viewpoint, at least physically. Its free outdoor performances have moved into Robert F. Wagner Jr. Park at the biotic tip of Manhattan. The temporary stage is backed by the harbor, piercing ships, Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty. As the sun sank through the opening show early Sunday evening, it all looked postcard perfect.

Also, the programming for this year's festival comes from the same old pot of view- solitude, as undiscriminating as Lady Liberty is supposed to be. Mixed bills need not have leading themes, but ideally the participants should share something other than mediocrity. On Sunday, a theme of Americans, appropriate for the setting, coursed through some selections by the program's tour companies. So did a penchant for literalism. But as in previous years, any moments of distinction felt jaccardent.

The Vanaver Caravan opened with a tribute to the folk musician and activist Pete Seeger, who died in January. The troupe revived excerpts from "Turn, Turn, Turn," a 1966 collaboration with Seeger, and the ranchhake蛙 gambling of the dancing and the musical accompaniment suggested that the rehearsal could use more polish. But even if polished, the material would still be earnest and bland, mainly illuminating the lyrics padded with gambling and some triple-clap dancing, all smiles and notes.

The Downtown Dance Festival continues through Thursday at Robert F. Wagner Jr. Park, Lower Manhattan, batterydance.org.

Like those songs, this amateur theatricals choreography can find strength in simplicity, as it did in the staging of Seeger's "Where Have All the Flowers Gone," which doggedly matched the lyrics, verse by verse. Girls in dresses looked for flowers, found husband's, washed the men to war. When the girls looked for flowers again, it was in a graveyard, and the repetition brought out the feeling in the song's form.

It was as sentimental as a sunset, but just as affecting.

Next came Adam H. Weinert and Logan Frances Krueger doing their own revival of choreography from the early 1930s by the modern dance pioneers Ted Shawn and Doris Humphrey. There was literalism and doggedness here, too. Shawn's "River Songs" were based on American folk music, though more durably and shaped than the previous dances, were equally bloodless. Humphrey's "Two Eclectic Themes" solos were schematic, a spinning down, a rising up. Yet with strong performances, Mr. Weinert and Ms. Krueger made a case for more than historical interest.

Annamaria Mazzini, who retired from the Paul Taylor Dance Company in 1981, is a dancer of great passion, and it was good to see her back on stage. Her company, Mazzini Dance Collective, performed works by her and her fellow Taylor alum Oronzo DeClemente that were tacked copies typical of Taylor's style. To an Irish flat song about going home, Ms. Mazzini pretended to go insane. Her ensemble choreography to Robert Peterson's "The Thin Ice of Your Fragile Mind" featured a woman who unpacks her own head and is tortured by mean girls. Though possible and static in concept, the piece had a quirky tone that made it refreshing amid this program's earnestness.

The festival's best troupe, Battery Dance Company, debuted a work (or even didn't yet have a title) by the visiting South African choreographer Theo Ntombi. Ntombi, who was writing American modern dance at its unblemished contemporary dance, far less stringent than the setting.
BACK TO SCHOOL WITH LOTS MORE AFTER

BY YANNIC RACK

On the upper floors of the Battery Park City School in Lower Manhattan, children from all over the city were finishing up their summer projects. In front of large windows with sprawling views of the Hudson, some were making last tweaks on the programming of their LEGO robots, while next door some teens were reading quietly. Across the hall, the filmmaking class had enlisted the theater group to star as extras in their latest short film production.

It was the last week of the "after-school" summer program at the school, also called i.S, 276, which is run by Manhattan Youth, one of the providers that are implementing the mayor's massive $145 million after-school expansion from this September. Thirteen Rocha has been with Manhattan Youth since 2001 and is their director of after-school programs.

"This year, what this mayor is doing — nobody has done this before, anywhere, ever," she said during a recent tour of the school's classrooms. "Nobody. This is bigger than anything anybody has ever done before... I hope that I get a chance to give him a bear hug.

Rocha has reason to be excited — Manhattan Youth has added six new contracts for middle schools throughout Manhattan, bringing their total to eight. Until now, they served both Battery Park City middle schools — i.S. 276 and 289 — as well as six Lower Manhattan elementary schools (it goes to seven this year) that have year-round after-school activities.

An after-school program at

Nearing the Last Summer Fling

Denis Bolbonas of Tangaj Dance from Romania viewed the crowd at the Downtown Dance Festival last week in Wagner Park. There are still many free summer events left including the Trisha Brown Dance Company, which is still performing through Sept. 28 on Governors Island. For youth events, see Pgs. 16-17.

With crowd crush continuing at Memorial, has one solution been crushed?

BY DUSICA SUE MALESEVIC AND JOSH ROGERS

Since the 9/11 Memorial Museum opened in May, many parties — Community Board 1, the mayor's office, N.Y.P.D., and the Port Authority — have been working to mitigate the crush of tourists that have descended on Liberty St. Some have wondered why the opening of Greenwich St. between Liberty St. and Vesey has been overlooked.

Corliss Way, which was to help alleviate the influx of foot traffic on Liberty St., opened a few weeks ago, and then closed again because of safety concerns as a crane was erected near World Trade Center 3. It is anticipated to reopen next week.

The opening of the museum allowed the memorial to eliminate its ticketing system and allow passersby to visit the memorial. But more pedestrian space has not reduced the crowds. Far from it.

There is a lot happening on Liberty St.: hawkers selling WTC Never Forget books; N.Y.P.D. Downtown Alliance security, and pedestrian safety from a private security firm all trying to help the flow of pedestrians; a member of the Tribeca Center sometimes stationed outside; vendors selling everything from water to tours to bus tickets; construction workers and tourists.

There is the idea that pedestrian flow could be allayed if Greenwich St. between Vesey, where the temporary PATH station is located, and...
GALLERIES

- **Andrew Salgado** “Variations of a Theme” features bold, large-scale figurative paintings of people against abstract backgrounds. To Wed., 7/16-Tue.-Sat., 11:30 am-6 pm. One Art Space, 23 Warren St., oneartspace.com.

- **Hidden Passagons** Group show organized by Ant Lahun. Features works by seven artists who explore the role of art in science fiction. To Thu., 7/26-Tue., 11 am-6 pm. apexart, 291 Church St., apexart.org.

- **George Schneeman** “A Painter and His Poets” is the first major retrospective of Schneeman’s collaborative paintings, collages, prints and books, with portraits of his poet friends. Spanning 40 years. To Sat., 6/30-Tue.-Fri., 11 am-7 pm. Poets House, 10 River Terrace, poetshouse.org.

MUSIC


- **Lowdown Hudson Blues Festival** Blues legendaries, including Shemekia Jones & The Slip Kicks, the Robert Cray Band, Howlin Wolf, and the James Cotton Organ Yoo, will perform their original, popular pieces. See brooklynnovac.com for schedule. Wed., 7/14 & Thu., 7/17, 6-10 pm. Free. Brooklyn Bridge Winter Garden, 220 Water St.

- **Twice as Good Performance** The Native American rock band from California. Thu., 7/17, 7 pm. Fee. National Museum of the American Indian, 1 Bowling Green, nmai.si.edu. 
Downtown Dance Festival

For a festival that started modestly 33 years ago, the Downtown Dance Festival is bursting at its seams. The fare ranges from established companies like Jennifer Muller/The Works (see Muller’s delightful “Choreography in Focus”) and Lori Belilove’s Isadora Duncan Dance Company, to new groups like the colorful (and rhythm-ful) Dorrance Dance.

Isadora Duncan Dance Company

The international fare is also adventurous. Wednesday is devoted to the Erasing Borders dance festival, which includes six dance artists from India, and Thursday brings a premiere by South African choreographer Theo Ndindwa for Battery Dance Company, which hosts the festival.

Entomo

Add to this a rare U.S. appearance by the new Madrid-based duo Entomo EA & AE. These two crazy guys poke and shudder and tangle in such insect-like ways that you could swear their arms are antennae and their legs are wings. They seem to have caught the rhythms of preying mantises; they could just as easily be mating or fighting to kill—shades of Jerome Robbins’ The Cage. (I was so impressed by them at the Havana festival in 2010 that I wrote them in this post.)

This year the festival takes place Aug. 17 to 21 in Battery Park City’s Robert F. Wagner Jr. Park. Click here for full schedule.