Thank heavens for Summer festivals, for they remind us of the relaxed pleasure of listening to music outdoors, rendered even more pleasurable by a pretty, verdant setting. The glory of the sun slowly sinking behind a stage, the cool feeling of grass beneath our feet, it’s all part of the show. In the case of the Battery Dance Festival, which began its run at Robert F. Wagner Park in Battery Park tonight, there is the stunning backdrop of New York Harbor to behold. Sailboats drift by, airplanes streak across the sky headed toward unknown destinations. The principal inconvenience, the brightness of the late-afternoon sun, diminishes over time, and in any case
Every year, the week-long Battery Dance Festival—which used to call itself the Downtown Dance Festival—including an evening of Indian dance, co-presented by the Indo-American Arts Council. The lineup of this festival-within-the-festival (which goes by the name Erasing Borders), is always strong. Interest in Indian dance seems to be on the rise in New York. There are a few yearly festivals now, and, in a couple of weeks, Erasing Borders will present a second, indoor performance at the Schimmel Center for the Arts at Pace University, near City Hall. (Drive East, another festival of Indian music and dance, ends on the 16th.)

One of the most appealing features of the Erasing Borders Festival is its eclecticism. The organizers bring dancers representing various classical traditions from across India. (Alas, no live music, at least this year.) The current edition includes Bharata Natyam, Kathak, Mohiniyattam, the popular Bhangra, and a much rarer dance-form derived from martial arts, Chhau, from Orissa. Though many of these dances have roots in the ancient dance treaty the Natya Shastra, they differ in significant ways. Each has its own movement style, its own poses, its own musical idiom, and its own way of responding to rhythm and melody. Kathak, developed mainly in the Mughal courts of northern India, is refined and highly codified. It would
that a non-expert quickly lost count. Each cycle of sixteen had a different visual emphasis. In some, attention was drawn to the arms, hands, or fingers, or the quickness of the feet; in others the focus was on turns or small jumps. Unfortunately, because of the heavily amplified music, some of the thrill of the footwork was lost, though not the elegance with which Wagh sustained each pose and finished each phrase, as if to mark it indelibly in our collective memory.

A New York-based troupe, Jiva Dance, performed an ensemble dance inspired by the movement of the peacock, in the Bharata Natyam style. Instead of the long tunic typical of Kathak, the five women wore fitted tops and a dhuti-like fabric wrapped around their legs to allow for deep squats and lunges. The piece they chose was lively, its rhythmic structure reflected by the

Dancers’ playful use of unison and call-and-response. The choreography, though not terribly complex, used the space well, resolving itself into strong diagonal, horizontal, and vertical lines. Jiva was followed by Pallavi Krishnan, a dancer specializing in Mohiniyattam, a particularly seductive dance from Kerala, a state that lies on the south-western coast of India. Everything about Mohiniyattam is rounded and sinuous, as fluid as the waters of the canals for which Kerala is famous. Krishnan was the most decoratively costumed of all the dancers, with a large, flat bun perched on the side of her head at a coquettish angle, and a layers of gold, saffron, and green-colored fabric held in place by a gold belt. Her piece, “Cholkettu,” was slow, almost mesmerizing in its repetition. Krishnan’s body formed soft curves, bending deeply from the spine; like water, she never stopped moving.

But the highlight of the evening—in part because of its novelty—were the two dances performed by Rakesh Sai Babu, the young male dancer specializing in the much less familiar Chhau dance style, from Orissa. Chhau includes elements of folk theatre, acrobatics, and martial arts. With its bent-legged running poses and freeze-frames, it is also reminiscent of Cambodian

dance-dramas. The first dance, “Dandi,” depicted a wandering ascetic, carrying a lantern in one hand and a drum on a stick in the other. The second, “Yuddha,” was a most un-warlike war dance, sinuous and almost playful. Both included impressive acrobatics: backbends, striking poses with one leg held in high attitude, turning jumps and leaps landing on one leg. Both were built upon a strongly-accented walking pattern, the dancer’s body rocking powerfully as he generously unfolded one leg and then the other. His upper and lower body worked in opposition to each other, elongating and augmenting each step. (It’s clearly a technique that requires enormous muscular control.) In the second dance, the sword in Sai Babu’s right hand extended those lines even further. During both, the dancer wore a slight, enigmatic smile, punctuating his feats with almost flirtatious shoulder shakes. It’s a most intriguing dance style that I’d like to see more of.

Then came the chaser, a rousing Bhangra performed by an all-female ensemble, Shaan Mutiyaaran Di Bhangra. Originally a folk dance from Punjab, Bhangra is now ubiquitous, from music videos to Bollywood movies to the lively college competition circuit here in the US. The music is straightforward, bouncy, preferably loud. The appeal is obvious: once the dance gets started, it’s impossible not to bounce along. It lends itself to large groups. With a little help, anyone can join in the fun. And after the official performance ended, that’s exactly what happened.
appear to be the most abstract of Indian dance forms, with a clean and crystalline technique that includes fast, precise turns, silvery jumps, and harmonious poses that allow the audience to admire the dancer from all sides.

Sanjukta Wagh, a Kathak dancer and choreographer from Mumbai, performed two pieces, the first of which, “Teentala: Kathak Nritta,” was a set of variations based on a sixteen-beat theme. (The basic structure of the “teentala” rhythm was explained by the Indian dance expert Rajika Puri in the first of several informative introductions.) The increasing complexity and syncopation of the variations—the beats indicated by the feet or the fingers or a flash of the eyes—was such
DANCE

A HARBOR BACKDROP FOR GLOBAL VISIONS

JACK ANDERSON

The Battery Dance Festival, through Aug. 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 bicyclists, 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 “Zonton,” for Mr. Celli’s Rome-based VIVO Ballet, takes its title from an ancient Greek word for “living.” Although Kate Thomas’s Ballet Neo 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. (8:30 p.m., Robert F. Wagner Jr. Park, Battery City, 212-219-3910)

Ballet Neo will perform “Fellini’s Dream” at the Battery Dance Festival.

STEPHEN DELASHMID
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 box office in New York. The audience was behind the dancers, the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, sailboats, cranes boats and yachts past. Any phone calls audible above the drubbing rain that at times overwhelmed the music, and at times drowned out the sound of dance. At 1:30 p.m., have the audience singing in their eyes. Baseball cap or dark sunglasses are sufficient.

This festival is admirably selective. This year’s includes the New York debut of Polish Dance Theatre (Sunday and Monday), an evening of Colombian dance (Tuesday) and—among many others—two world premieres for the host, Battery Dance. One of them is by the former longtime Martha Graham principal dancer Teddy Bullock. This year’s festival began on Saturday with the Indian American Arts Council’s Crossing Borders Festival of Indian Dance, always for me a highlight of this 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 ethereal Punjabi folk form Bhauka; the elaborately expressive body form Chhau (from the eastern state of Odisha, and some of the nation’s classical dance styles—Mohiniattam (from Kerala), in the southwest), Bharatnatyam (from Tamil Nadu, in the south) and Kathk (from the north, originally from the courts). The most unusual was Western eyes: the two examples of Chhau, performed by Rakesh Jai Bhoj.

A further ingredient for curiosity was Mr. Sai Bhoj, from the royal family of Mysuru in Karnataka in Odisha and was trained by his father. It is a famous state of dance history that ballet was once performed by French royalty, but until now I have had reservations about roping in members of any royal family. Chhau, as the title and authoritative Mr. Sai Bhoj showed it, is a highly complex form, vigorous for the upper and lower body, sometimes asking dancers to hold a balance that was never-colliding and harlequin, in following leghorns and with the side-kicks that appear in many Indian dance forms. His first piece, “Dandi,” demonstrated the renunciation of the wandering acrobat. “Yudhisthira,” the second, was a martial arts number deriving from the royal court of Mysuru.

But, it was striking how full-bodied the dancing was. As the acrobatic, he entered all the way back and sideways; his martial dance was accompanied by memorably graceful glides of the shoulders. His legs were well set, and cut again, turning legs and strides into rhythmically detailed图案. My mind reverberated about these examples of Chhau regarding the sequence of their music: bashing drums and drooping pipes. The most transporting dance of the program was the treading by the Kathak performer Subhadra Wagh (from Mumbai). As she showed, Kathak is characterized by dextrously intricate footwork and many turns, but its stillnesses were yet more beautiful.

Mr. Wagh ended a dance not just with a sudden halt (as occurs in all Kathak) but as if she were switching into an exceptional 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 concentration. I’d love to see her with live music; with no Indian dance form 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 eloquence. And she showed how Kathak makes rhythm expressive with arms, serpents and eyes, as well as with feet. In her final number, “Thumri,” Storytelling in Kathak—enchanting aspects of the eternal love of Radha for Krishna, her costume—a tall blue, highly red dress topped by a stringingly green veil—was the most ravishing aspect of the evening.

I also loved the Mohiniattam dancing of Pallavi Krishnan (from Thrissur, Kerala). It is well known that Mohiniattam is characterized by sonorous side-to-side or circular swaying of the dancer’s torso, but Ms. Krishnan proved a sophisticated stylist who showed many further nuances of the genre, while the knees and thighs are propelling the turns to tilt in one way, the bare foot is pounding out an intricate rhythm. The hands and arms, meanwhile, are communicative. Phrases are long and connected.

Above, the Mohiniattam dance of Pallavi Krishnan during this event in Lower Manhattan. Left, the Kathak performer Subhadra Wagh.

You follow the dance as it turns downstream on a shifting current. The green and purple colors of Somai Skandar and her four jets of a dance co-performers (from New York) illustrated 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 is compelling. Among many fine points, the fleeting of individual fingers—always remarkable in the dance forms of Southern India—seemed to be more exquisite.

New York also provided the closing performance, a Bharatnatyam number delivered by the five women of Shna Montes and Dima Shnra. The high energy of this last genre was originally associated with Punjabis but, as has been occurring in recent decades across the terrain of Indian dance, women have felt free to involve it. These five were each dressed in a different bright color, although this was the program’s least notable item, its powerful pulse, its morally engaging force and its occasional jumps made it a winning finale.

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

Rakesh Sai Bhoj danced two numbers of the folk form Chhau.
The harbour over which the Statue of Liberty presides is backdrop to the weeklong Battery Dance Festival. It’s a very picturesque setting — if you can see. For the first hour of the Erasing Borders showcase for Indian dance, the audience had to stare into the sun, squinting and sweating and grumbling between numbers. Still, no one left, a testament to the excellence of the artists and programming. The soloists flown in from India for the occasion were especially impressive. In the best pieces, each dancer’s idiom seemed tuned precisely for the dance at hand.

Kathak invites showboating, given the intricate rhythms beaten out by bell-laden feet and the junket of turns adorned with flamelike arms. But the statuesque Sanjukta Wagh made the form worthy of a pious invocation to Shiva, god of creation, destruction and dance. Wagh’s carriage was regal, her arms strongly angled, her steps and gestures crisply etched. When she paused, a meditative stillness pooled around her. And her drumming feet served not as the usual showstopper but as a summoning of energy.
Rakesh Sai Babu, descendent of royal Chhau performers, took advantage of the bowlegged stance and vigorous crooked-leg swings characteristic of this male dance to depict a holy man’s wanderings. This was a walking dance. With collection box in one hand and canteen of holy water in the other, Sai Babu paced the stage purposefully to heavy drums. Swinging his leg in a figure-eight to initiate each step and lunging low as he transferred his weight, he emphasised the seeker’s effortful quest yet buoyant spirit.

In its swaying softness, mohiniyattam is said to reflect its native land, balmy Kerala. Too often, though, it resembles a lacklustre version of the voluptuous dance-drama odissi. Not with Pallavi Krishnan, who blew in sideways like a welcome breeze. Head charmingly atilt and eyes averted from wherever she was headed, Krishnan swayed from side to side and sank low in plié. Her torso slanted backward so the humble belly, not the commanding head, appeared to lead. She seemed the blessed beneficiary of a benign Nature. And, indeed, as Krishnan danced, the sun did us the kindness of setting.

A second edition of ‘Erasing Borders’ appears at Pace University August 28; batterydance.org; iaac.us
Battery Dance Festival

I often wish that New York had a festival to match San Francisco’s annual Ethnic Dance Festival; and I admire any enterprise that adds to the sum of our knowledge of ethnic dance. On Tuesday evening at 6:30, the weeklong open-air Battery Dance Festival (Robert F. Wagner Jr. Park, facing the Statue of Liberty) hosts an Evening of Colombian Dance. I’ve seen Peruvian dance twice at the San Francisco festival, and various forms of Tango Argentino (often from several South American countries) often visit this city. Colombian dance, however, is unknown terrain to me and many others.
Dance

**FREE Battery Dance Festival**
This free celebration (formerly the Downtown Dance Festival) welcomes dance from India, Colombia, Norway, Poland and, of course, New York. The splashy final event on Fri 21 goes indoors to Pace University, but the other performances take place in Robert F. Wagner Park, in front of the sparkling New York Harbor. Michael Schimmel Center for the Arts at Pace University, 3 Spruce St (212-219-3910, batterydance.org). Wed 19, Thu 20 6:30pm; Fri 21 6pm.
Folk dance is usually more fun to do than watch. It tends to be repetitive and minimalist so everyone from children to grandparents can join in. Battery Dance Festival’s Evening of Colombian Dance reminded us, however, of the artistic virtue in this economy of means.

Most of the folk numbers performed by the opening act, the New York-based Pajarillo Pinta’o, count as courting rituals: an ardent man gradually wins over a diffident woman. Once he has travelled across the stage on his knees and run circles around her like a puppy, she deigns to face him. She plucks up the edge of the banner he has been waving for their love so that it stretches between them. The gesture signifies both their bond and its opposite, the decorous distance that proper romance demands.

If only Pajarillo’s director, Daniel Fetecua Soto, had applied this poetic compression to his contemporary work. Instead we got pantomime: lovers brushing their teeth, rolling on
top of each other, and spanking each other (or at least the man, the woman). The more said, the less meant.

Thankfully the headliner, Sankofa Danzafro of Medellín making its New York debut, did not force us to choose between poetry and urbanity. Director Rafael Palacios’s *La Ciudad de los otros (The Others’ City)* was judicious in form, resonant with meaning, and delivered in dance languages that ran the gamut from diasporic African to Latinised hip-hop.

The 40-minute work established its setting with a single prop — office chairs, arranged over the course of the dance to indicate cubicles, prison bars, a health clinic waiting room and a crowded train. Against these backdrops of work and suffering, the dancers declared themselves, each via a particular patch of dance or music. Lithe William Camilo Perlaza Micolta lent a stark drama to traditional African steps. Others popped and locked with an undulant looseness rarely seen in the US. They were individuals not despite culture but because of it.

The group had a distinct character — or several. As in a real city, the mass could be monolithic and faceless one moment, empathetic and protective the next. Palacios conveyed the difference subtly, clearly and wisely.
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 Palestine were among those appearing along the Hudson River — routinely backed by stunning, if blinding, names — 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 Sanukfa Danza Afro from Medellín, Colombia. It shared an evening of Colombian dance with Pajarillo Pinta's Dance Company, a New York troupe founded in Germany by the Linosa Dance Company coleader (and Pina Bausch moonlighter) Daniel Foleosa Sosa. Sanukfa means "reach back and get it" in Akan, a Ghanaian language, and it describes what both companies do: carry traditions into the present, whether fully intact or fused with something new. The down-to-earth performance of Pajarillo began with a medley of Colombian folkloric dances, upbeat courtship rituals (for the most part) in which straw hats, handkerchiefs and candles, respectfully borrow and exchanged, served as tokens of affection or more. (The Riverside breeze sent hats flying, a cause for improvisation.)

With their weaving patterns, waving skirts (for the women) and knowling, close-to-the-floor steps, these dancers had an inviting formal simplicity that was lost in "Amalgama," a more contemporary connection with a live band. (Pablo Mayor on piano, composed the jazz-folk music.) Still, any chance to watch the statuesque Clement Menah, an awesomely silky smoker, is welcome. He and Julia Kelly played giddy lovebirds whose separate daily routines (brushing teeth, tying shoes) merged into one. The evening's revelation was Sanukfa's "La Ciudad de los Órcaos" ("The City of Orcaes"), an episodic work about urban struggle and resilience combining elements of hip-hop and Afro-Colombian dance. Could an indoor stage have contained this company's energy? The seven dancers and four musicians worked seamlessly together, with break-out moments for both singers and dancers. (The music transformed from live to recorded, building to thumping techno.)

Costumes of collared shirts and ties suggested a workplace grind or pressure to conform. That uniformity made departures from it all the more powerful, like violently shuddering solos for the spindly William Camilo Portaza Meza and the troupe's leader of sorts, Sandra Catalina Majoer Mora. The stage was not the only platform: Chairs, plywood planks and other dancers created multi-leveled terrain for all to navigate. Ending in a tight formation, they even stuck together for the how.
Stunning sunset images from the Battery Dance Festival

Five companies danced the night away in front of the Statue of Liberty, who gave every performance her standing ovation.

The last of the major dance festivals this summer, the Battery Dance Festival finished its outdoor programming with a night that included Alison Cook Beatty Dance’s work Banshee’s Lamentation, Tina Croll + Company’s Ancient Springs, Mari Meade Dance Collective’s Cog, Jennifer Muller/The Works’s Flowers and Alchemy and Battery Dance’s own newest work, choreographed by Tadej Brdnik. A week that also boasted the impressive Evening of Colombian Dance, has finally finished—and with it a wonderful season of outdoor dance in New York. An impressive fall season is just ahead, so be sure to continue checking out the best dance shows in New York!
Check out pictures of the Evening of Colombian Dance in Battery Park

The Battery Dance Festival took viewers on a dance-filled vacation to South America, all without leaving New York Harbor.

The outdoor Battery Dance Festival (once the Downtown Dance Festival) has always been one of the best places to catch international companies, so it came as no surprise that this South American lineup was full of delights. The bill was split between New York company Pajarillo Pintado—founded by Limón Dance Company vet Daniel Fetecka—whose works you see here spanning traditional folk forms and Latin-inflected modern dance, and the Colombian company Sankofa Danza Afro, whose chair-brandishing work “La Ciudad de los Otros” segued from traditional Afro-Colombian forms into pulse-pounding contemporary hip-hop. If you missed it, you should be sure to catch the Jose Limon International Festival this fall and, as always, stay abreast of the best dance events this week!

Dance

★ BATTERY DANCE FESTIVAL (Friday) This largely outdoor festival moves indoors for its final event, the New York debut of the renowned Bharatanatyam dancer Shanmugha Sundaram, in a solo exploring the Hindu god Ganesha. The program also includes the Norwegian troupe Ingun Bjornsgaard Prosjekt and Lower Manhattan’s Battery Dance Company. At 6 p.m., Michael Schimmel Center for the Arts, Pace University, 3 Spruce Street, between Park Row and Gold Street, Lower Manhattan, 212-219-3910, batterydance.org/festival. (Burke)
Battery Dance Festival
The free festival, organized by Battery Dance Company, closes with two more shows against the bright backdrop of New York Harbor. These programs mingle little-known choreographers with such mid-list veterans as Jacquelyn Buglisi and Jennifer Muller. On Aug. 21, the proceedings move indoors, to Pace University’s Schimmel Center (at 3 Spruce St.), where the Norwegian company Ingun Bjørnsgaard Prosjekt (which makes its American début earlier in the festival) presents the fragmented and stagy “Praeambulum.” It shares the evening with the festival’s host troupe, as well as with the bharatanatyam dancer Shanmugha Sundaram. (Robert F. Wagner, Jr., Park, 20 Battery Park Pl. 212-219-3910. Aug. 19-21.)
One of the best parts of a New York City summer is the plethora of outdoor dance performances that seem to spring up all over town. From the Rockaway Beach to Bryant Park, dancers are taking to the streets, connecting with new audiences and energizing all sorts of public spaces. It’s a special thing to being dance to the masses, and it’s what Battery Dance Festival does best.

Organized by Jonathan Hollander and his company, Battery Dance, the festival celebrated its 34th anniversary last week with a series of performances in Robert F. Wagner, Jr. Park (as a company, Battery Dance is celebrating a concurrent 40th anniversary). Battery Dance is particularly well-known for two objectives: representing and showcasing the dance community of Manhattan’s southernmost neighborhoods (“downtown-downtown,” as some call it), and promoting cultural diplomacy by traveling the world as ambassadors of American dance. At home in New York, they help to present foreign dance artists who have little exposure in the United States. As a director, Mr. Hollander has also supported the independent careers of his company members, and has presented many Battery Dance alumni in the annual Festival.

Sunday night’s program included a little bit of everything that Battery Dance Festival has come to stand for. The program included contributions from former and current Battery Dance company members, the world premiere of Tadej Brdnik’s new work for Battery

Dance, and performances by international artists Asia Duo, Sankofa Danzafro, and Polish Dance Theatre

The offerings ranged greatly in both style and caliber. “Pleased 2 Meet U,” a well-traveled duet by former Battery Dance company member Tony Morales and performed by two women from MoralesDance, mixed ballet vocabulary with playful theatrics and partnering. Brooklyn-based Indelible Dance Company, led by current BD-dancer Robin Cantrell, presented excerpts of their 2014 work “Wonderland,” including a duet that showed off the long, lithe limbs of dancer Giorgia Bovo. Asia Duo’s piece “Draw-err”, the joint effort of Fairul Zahid (from Malaysia) and Yachao Zhu (from Beijing), provided more than just moments of exquisite dancing; they exemplified the international collaborations that are becoming increasingly possible and popular as the global dance community becomes more integrated in the digital age.

Midway through the program, Colombian group Sankofa Danzafro took the stage with a jolt of energy that surged throughout their entire performance. Featuring a live drummer and flutist, their work La Ciudad de Los Otros portrayed the harshness of city life. Dressed formally in white shirts and black pants, the dancers sprung to life like overworked employees letting loose on Friday night, jamming out with fast and furious jumps and turns and crafting compelling rhythms with their footwork.

When the festival’s hosts took the stage, their capability to work as an ensemble featured strongly. For their first work, Battery Dance company member Sean Scantlebury’s Terra & Astra, two pairs of dancers negotiated the space in the manner of atoms, colliding, separating, and rejoining in new formations. Scantlebury’s molecular inspiration was quite clear as the dancers leapt into each other’s arms, swept each other across the stage, and maintained tension between their bodies through precarious counterbalances. The company closed the program with Inter/Ago, a work for five dancers by acclaimed Martha Graham dancer Tadej Brdnik. Mr. Brdnik is a seasoned professional, and he has an eye for arranging movement cohesively across the stage; the alternation between sharp
slicing motions and soft swirling ones suggests the ebb and flow of a delicate wave. As the dancers transitioned from duets and trios into full cast quintets, sometimes pausing to watch each other while seated on set pieces designed by Reynaldo Then, Brdnik renders an overarching sense of care and compassion between the performers. As they gently catch each other under the arms, breaking falls without stopping momentum, we sense that they dance both with and for each other.

The most captivating performance of the evening, however, came from Polish Dance Theatre. The group from Poznań started off with an excerpt of Artistic Director Ewa Wycichowska’s It’s Already Dusk. Based on the duel with Death from Ingmar Bergman’s film “The Seventh Seal,” the excerpt opens with six dancers gradually falling to the ground and being helped back up, until an ominous figure of Death takes the stage. Death is intimidating, looming on stilts over the dancers, but all presumption falls away when he begins practicing a few balletic steps of his own and conducting the audience to orchestrate their applause.

Though they had traveled thousands of miles to make their New York debut, the dancers were completely at ease. Not even a boatful of hecklers passing the park could disturb their performance. The dancers are independently skilled technicians, but their ability to coalesce on stage was particularly striking, and this showed especially well in the second half of their performance, an excerpt from Takako Matsuda’s Thousand Colours. The section they performed was very lively, reminiscent of revelers sharing their party tricks as dancers take turns to break from the pack to show off a special jump or a quick, exuberant turn. There’s a lot going on, but Matsuda has carefully organized the choreography to keep the space from

feeling overwhelmed by movement, and the dancers are likewise careful to hit their marks and keep time without losing the casual feel of dancing for pleasure.

I have a feeling this will not be the last New York City hears of the Polish Dance Theatre. Speaking with Andrzej Kryczka, the company’s Foreign Relations Manager, after the show, he explained the company’s impulse to share Polish contemporary work both at home and abroad. “Whatever treasures you have,” he says, “you try to bring those treasures to the world.” In their home town of Poznań, the company takes a holistic approach when assessing its purpose in the dance community. The company strives to provide its dancers with versatile work by giving multiple premieres each year, and offers opportunities for dancers to explore and develop their own choreographic voices. As an educational body, Polish Dance Theatre hosts community classes and workshops. In fact, Battery Dance company members will travel to Poland later this month to teach at Polish Dance Theatre’s own long-running international community dance festival, Dancing Poznań. Indeed, Mr. Hollander’s vision of cultural exchange is materializing before our eyes. As the sun sets over New York Harbor, here’s to many more years of sharing the dance world’s treasures with the people of New York City.
Battery Dance Festival 2015

Multiple Dance Companies
Produced by Battery Dance Company

Off Off Broadway, Dance
Ran through 8.21.15
Robert F. Wagner, Jr. Park, Battery Park City

by Jane Sato on 9.13.15

BOTTOM LINE: No other NYC dance company hosts an ethnic dance festival representing over six different countries while serving up views of the sun setting over the Statue of Liberty for free.

From looking around the audience, one can see that this festival has achieved its mission to unite the locals, tourists, dance aficionados, and newcomers to the art form as the sun sets over the Hudson River. The energy was electric as Indelible Dance, directed by Robin Cantrell, started off the
evening with an excerpt of *Wonderland*, a pulsing group piece choreographed by Sean Scantlebury in which the dancers use their classical lines to make aggressive capoeira-like strokes through the air. They are the perfect balance between stiff and fluid as their arms slash across the Hudson River in the background.

A peaceful and precise male duet by Asia Duo called *Draw-er* was next one on the program I saw. Fairul Zahid and Yachao Zhu, dancers from Malaysia and Beijing, layer their own contemporary influence over their background in Asian folkloric dance proving that the sum equals more than the addition of its parts. Tenderness was then brought to the stage by Battery Dance Company’s duet *Terra and Astra*. Sean Scantlebury’s duet is sweet and sinewy as this long limbed couple would twist around each other like a pretzel and then unwind into a long elegant lift. Cantrell’s lines go on for days. The emotional range to this duet is genuine and therefore very powerful and moving.

During the 2015 festival, Battery Dance Company also presented two companies in their US premieres—the Columbian company Sankofa Danzafro and the Polish Dance Theater. Sankofa Danzafro’s *La Cuidad de los Otros* is politically relevant with its tension in urban city life. This company’s mission is to bring together Afro-Columbians and Columbians. As one person is shunned from the group at points, this piece clearly demonstrated the physical and emotional divide that some Colombians might face, a potentially universal message as they transcend all with celebratory dance moves. These steps are based on African dance tradition and the dancers seem to move so fast they could light the stage on fire with the heat of their feet. Live musicians complemented the recordings. The Polish Dance Theater’s *It’s Already Dusk*, by Ewa Wycichowska, was the most cinematic piece of the evening. In this piece, the ominous figure of death promenades the stage on stilts as dancers joyfully trot around him without really seeing him. The piece is an interpretation of Ingmar Bergman’s *The Seventh Seal*, in which a medieval knight duels with Death. Wycichowska’s piece is well-crafted and easy to understand even if you haven’t seen this film.

Battery Dance Company closed the evening out with a world premiere by Graham dancer Tadej Brdnik called *Inter/Ago*. This dance met the sunset overhead with drama and beautiful ensemble dancing. The company has never looked better and more cohesive as a group as they flowed from duet to solo to trio. The benches are used architecturally as they are stacked on their sides and then lowered onto their feet and used as platforms for the dancers. I couldn’t think of a better way to spend a Sunday summer evening than to be at the waterfront watching such a varied array of dancing. It is a true celebration of New York City and of the dance world uniting to enjoy its spoils and to welcome new eyes and ears into the art form.

(*Battery Dance Festival 2015* played at the Robert F. Wagner, Jr. Park, in Battery Park City, from August 15-21, 2015. Performances were nightly at 6:30PM. Admission was free to the public. For more information, visit [www.batterydance.org](http://www.batterydance.org).)