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Austin, TX

**DON'T MISS THESE
GROUNDBREAKING
CONVERSATIONS**



Woman, do you fear? by Jenny Gerena performed during Breaking Ground 2018.

Michael Simon

Breaking Ground 2018 Channeled Women's Strength and Resilience

LYNN TRIMBLE | JANUARY 22, 2018 | 7:00AM

108 As women across the U.S. and beyond participated in marches designed to elevate their political power, artists and community members gathered in Tempe for a dance festival that channeled women's diversity, strength, and

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resilience.

The two-day Breaking Ground dance and film festival, presented by CONDER/dance at Tempe Center for the Arts on Friday and Saturday, January 19 and 20, perfectly captured the present moment in American life – when women are reaffirming their rights to shape and share their own stories.



Breaking Ground is the brainchild of Carley Conder, founder and artistic director for Tempe's CONDER/dance. She launched the festival in 2008, and it's become a staple of the metro

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Phoenix dance scene, by consistently showcasing an intriguing mix of contemporary dance works by local, national, and international artists.

The 2018 festival was particularly strong, primarily because a significant number of choreographers championed women's agency over their bodies, emotions, ideas, and actions.

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Still image from *Floating Chronologies* choreographed by Mary Fitzgerald.

Mary Fitzgerald

A black-and-white dance film called *Floating*

Chronologies helped set the tone for *Breaking Ground* 2018. Dmitri von Klein filmed choreographer Mary Fitzgerald and six additional dancers moving through a desert landscape.

Representing three generations of women, their sweeping movements and shifting pairings conveyed strength, freedom, resolve, and sisterhood. Like several of this year's offerings, the film was, in part, a meditation on aging.

For *Hybrids of Plants and of Ghosts*, choreographer Rosanna Tavaréz chose a sound score that included a taped conversation with her mother, Lelia Tavaréz, on the topic of her late grandmother's Alzheimer's disease.

Tavaréz, a Los Angeles-based artist who uses the moniker La Dansa Dansa, performed the piece with Jen Hong. Tavaréz's choreography culminated

with the unraveling of a
yarn head wrap
symbolizing her
grandmother's shifting
identity, and reflected the
agonizing push and pull of
competing emotions
experienced by family
caregivers.



Natalie Clevenger performs *Dust to Dust*
during Breaking Ground 2018.

Michael Simon

Each piece spoke to
women's strength and
resilience, as did a pair of
works exploring the
experience of death.

Saturday's program
opened with *Wake*, in
which Sarah Haas
channeled emotions she
felt as a 12-year-old
attending her mother's
wake. Danced against a
stark black background,
with silence punctuated
only periodically by Haas'
angst-ridden screams, it
conveyed the intertwined

conveyed the intertwined feelings of wanting to give up and resolving to press on.

Breaking Ground 2018 also included *Dust to Dust* by Tucson choreographer Shelly Hawkins, which was danced by Natalie Clevenger to an old American folk tune. The work imagines a woman coming to grips with her own life choices, even as she approaches death. Clevenger's graceful, sweeping arm movements mirrored the woman's graceful acceptance of the trajectory of her life. The beauty of Hawkins' dance was compounded by a large palo verde branch suspended in air above the stage.



Jay Carlon of *Dance Film Selfie* at Tempe Center for the Arts.

Michael Simon

Although several works addressed loss that


addressed loss, that
certainly wasn't the sole
aspect of human existence
explored by this year's
lineup of choreographers.

Jay Carlon's *Dance Film
Selfie*, comprising a
montage of videos he's
filmed of his own
spontaneous dances
undertaken in
unconventional settings
on several continents,
revealed the human drive
toward wonder and play.
And the artist collective
Tales Between Our Legs
used animal masks and
snippets of comments by
self-indulgent artists and
audience members to poke
fun at the human tendency
towards grandiosity – with
a piece titled *A Dismal
Glimpse at a Script We
Created to Keep Us Moving
Forward*.

New York-based
choreographer Pamela
Pietro considered the
narratives individuals
create for their own lives
in a work called *all the
things i thought i knew...*, a

piece commissioned by Carley Conder as part of her ongoing Flying Solo project. Conder danced the piece on Friday night, demonstrating her gift for marrying strong, clean technique with subtle expressions of emotion that enhance rather than overshadow her movement.

Phoenix-based Jenny Gerena created work with a whole other feel, which was inspired in part by the instincts of wolves. Gerena choreographed *Woman, do you fear?* with the five dancers who perform with her in the piece, assuring that it included each one's "individual feminist perspectives on dominance, protection, solitude, and solidarity." The resulting dance elevates women's impulses toward being wild and free – and protective of other women. It's one of four works that premiered during this year's Breaking Ground festival.





A Dismal Glimpse at a Script We Create to Keep Us Moving Forward by Tales Between Our Legs.

Courtesy of CONDER/dance

Although several of the best performances focused on women's experiences, Breaking Ground 2018 also included broader perspectives.

For example, Los Angeles-based choreographer Julio Medina performed his own work titled *I Gotta*, which blends breaking and modern dance as it questions what Medina calls "the relationship between masculinity, sexuality, and vulnerability." Picture a man told to improve his break dancing by drawing on the feeling of dominating a woman during sex. Then imagine that's not even close to being this man's thing, and you see the dilemma.

Liz Casebolt and Joel Smith, a pair of California-based artists who perform as casebolt and smith, premiered a piece called *(the) More i see*, which reflects the gender expectations in male/female relationships, aided by a record player, a long row of album covers, and several interludes of slow dancing.



Joel Smith and Liz Casebolt performing at Breaking Ground 2018.

Michael Simon

Two additional works premiered during Breaking Ground 2018, including *Perception of Separation* by Shauna Meredith and *Ruined Places* by Carley Conder. Both are elaborate pieces choreographed in collaboration with dancers who performed them.

Meredith's piece was developed through a Breaking Ground

BREAKING GROUND

residency with [nueBOX], a new works development organization founded by Julie Akerly, who dances in the work along with Meredith and three other dancers.

Perceptions of Separation merges “quantum physics and the psychology of identity and perception” to address the importance of human connections.

Ruined Places “explores how it feels to be directly outside a circle of what is known,” according to program notes.



Taimy Miranda and Joan Rodriguez perform in Carley Conder's *Ruined Places*.

Michael Simon

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Unfortunately, both were out of place in Breaking Ground 2018, which included such a rich array of visceral dance tackling the vast depth of human emotions. Both were more conceptual and abstract than their counterparts, which delivered a raw, relatable emotional charge.

Still, the festival was a success on several fronts.

Breaking Ground continues to elevate the importance of artist collaborations within and across disciplines. It exposes Arizona audiences to the world of contemporary dance beyond its own borders. And it provides a platform to showcase Arizona's own talented creatives.

The fact that so many of those creatives happened to be women, especially during a period of cultural upheaval marked by renewed focus on women's power, is just one more reason Breaking Ground

Reason Breaking Ground
still resonates.



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Sat., Mar. 3,
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TICKETS

Sun., Mar. 18,
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TICKETS

Thu., Mar. 8,
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The King a...

TICKETS

Tue., Mar. 20,
7:30pm

DaVinci & ...

TICKETS

Sat., Mar. 10,
7:30pm

Lyric Opera...

TICKETS

Sun., Mar. 25,
6:00pm

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TICKETS

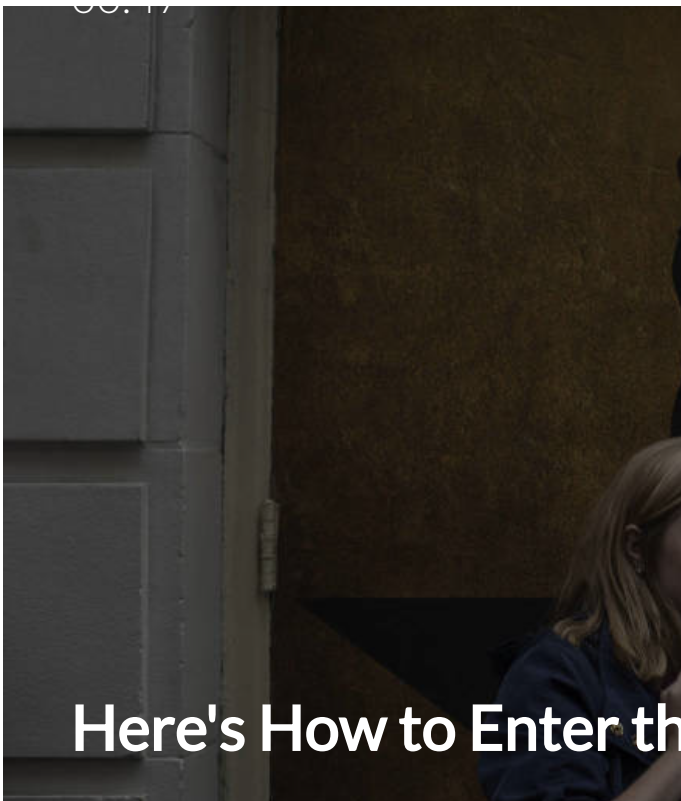
Wed., Feb. 14,
7:30pm

Taylor Mac

TICKETS







Sat., Apr. 7,
7:00pm

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How to Enter the *Hamilton* Ticket Lottery

TANNER STECHNIJ | JANUARY 24, 2018 | 6:00AM

-  You might have a chance to pick up tickets for
-  ²² *Hamilton* at ASU
-  Gammage on the cheap.
-  The Tempe theater is offering \$10 orchestra tickets to 40 lottery
-  winners at each show during the Broadway-smash musical's run.
- 

The first lottery opens at 11 a.m. on Sunday, January 28, for tickets to the

opening night performance on Tuesday, January 30. Ticket-hopefuls can enter by using the official *Hamilton* app or by registering on the *Hamilton* website.

Each subsequent lottery begins two days prior to the performance at 11 a.m. and closes the day prior at 9 a.m. Winners will be notified around 11 a.m. the day before their selected performance and will have the opportunity to purchase up to two tickets at \$10 apiece.

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Additional rules and eligibility restrictions can be found on ASU

[Gammage's website.](#)

Hamilton's Gammage run continues through Sunday, February 25. While here, the touring cast of the acclaimed musical will put on eight performances a week – six evening shows from Tuesday to Sunday and two matinees on the weekends.

The 11-time Tony-winning musical depicts the life of founding father Alexander Hamilton. The show has broken box office records and received critical success. Additionally, the show's creator, playwright, composer, and original star, Lin-Manuel Miranda, is the recipient of many non-theater-centric accolades for *Hamilton*, including a MacArthur Grant, a Grammy, and a Pulitzer Prize.

If you don't want to risk the lottery (and are willing to splurge), some tickets are still available through [Ticketmaster](#). However, seats are selling out, and

prices range from \$160 to more than \$500.

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