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NORTH TEXAS PERFORMING ARTS NEWS

# 2018 IN REVIEW

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## The Year in Dance: Part 2

### Dance writer Katie Dravenstott on her favorite new dance works of 2018.

by [Katie Dravenstott](#)  
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Photo: Anne Marie Bloodgood

Face What's Facing You by Claude Alexander III for Dallas Black Dance Theatre

This year saw the creative juices flowing from well-known local dance artists, including Joshua L. Peugh, Katie Cooper and Kimi Nikaidoh as well as guest artists who brought styles that had yet to be seen in Dallas such as Yin Yue's FoCo contemporary dance style and Gabrielle Lamb's bird-like quality and theatricality. We also saw the resurgence of authentic jazz technique from Southern Methodist University (SMU) Artist-in-Residence Brandi Coleman and the expansion of Bombshell Dance Project's technical fortitude in a new piece by visiting choreographer Amanda Krische.

A few of the works on my list this year also featured live accompaniment, including Cooper's *The Little Match Girl Passion*, Nikaidoh's *The Face of Water* and Peugh's evening-length work *Aladdin*, حنيني. We also saw more musical collaborations with local talent such as Cooper's Avant Chamber Ballet with Verdigris Ensemble and Peugh with SMU alum Brandon Carson who worked on both *Aladdin* and Lamb's *Can't Sleep But Lightly*.

Relatability also played a big part in my decision making for this list, and while every piece made me feel something, the one that spoke to me the loudest was *Aladdin*. He managed to address a sense of community and an uninhibited



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In no particular order, here are my favorite new works made in 2018:

### ***The Little Match Girl Passion* by Katie Cooper**

Avant Chamber Ballet and Verdigris Ensemble

December

Moody Performance Hall, Dallas

Always one willing to break the mold when it comes to classical ballet, Katie Cooper paired her company, Avant Chamber Ballet, with the vocalists of choral outfit Verdigris Ensemble for a very sobering and elegantly danced performance of David Lang's *A Little Match Girl Passion* at Moody Performance just a few weeks ago. Cooper took a very different approach for the choreography in this performance. Instead of bouts of group *allegro* and *adagio* movements Cooper had the corps act as scenery and story imagery, which only added to the balletic lines and character portrayal of lead dancer Juliann McAloon. ACB took a risk with such a somber show, but while the show brought to the surface the feelings of loss and sadness, it also presented airs of beauty and spiritual awakening.

### ***Aladdin, حبيبي* by Joshua L. Peugh**

Dark Circles Contemporary Dance

October

AT&T Performing Arts Center, Wylly Theatre, Sixth Floor Studio Theatre, Dallas

Peugh stretched his artistic boundaries with his first evening-length work, *Aladdin, Habib*, which Dark Circles Contemporary Dance performed back in October as part of the AT&T Performing Arts Center's Elevator Project. Known for giving very few details about his pieces to his dancers, Peugh admitted *Aladdin* was a completely new experience for himself. He stepped outside his comfort zone with repurposed set design, strong character portrayals and live music. The movement was a blend of Peugh's signature heavy-footed walking steps, twisty curvy floor work and subtle gesturing with more accented hips, body ripples and staccato movements typically associated with Middle Eastern dance cultures. The narrative is based on "The Story of Aladdin" as well as company member Chadi El-koury's own personal story of coming to America with his family as a young boy, which he approached with calm determination and an emotional intensity we had yet to see from him.

### ***And One More Thing...* by Brandi Coleman**

Meadows Dance Ensemble

October

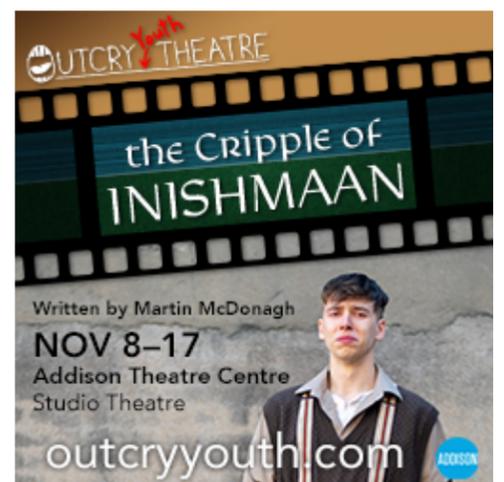
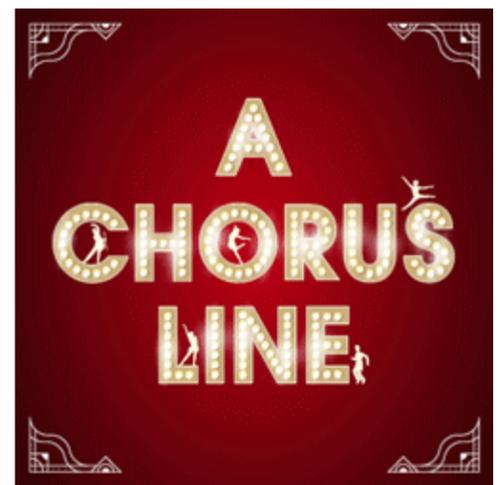
Southern Methodist University, Bob Hope Theatre, Dallas



Photo: Meadows Dance Ensemble

Brandi Coleman's *And One More Thing...* at SMU

One of the few jazz choreographers in the U.S. trained in Jump Rhythm Technique, Coleman wowed the audiences with her funky and loud jazz number, *And One More Thing...*, at Southern Methodist University's Meadows School of the Arts Fall Dance Concert in October. Originally created in 2015, Coleman added on three new sections with a grand finale that featured a large group of females dressed in



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"Tell Me Something Good" by between the juxtaposition of stillness and through subtle gestures and scats energy and scat-singing, a

fundamental element of Jump Rhythm Technique. It was fun and rambunctious and definitely a work worth seeing again.

### **LUNA by Amanda Krische**

Bombshell Dance Project

June

Moody Performance Hall, Dallas

Repetitive phrases that travel every which way was the foundation for New York-based choreographer Amanda Krische's *LUNA*, which was part of Bombshell Dance Project's *Like A Girl* performance at Moody Performance Hall last June. Emily Bernet and Taylor Rodman tapped into their inner beasts in order to maintain their energy levels throughout the 10-minute work which started out with the two of them walking a specific number of steps before the monotonous phrase was broken up with gestures, pauses and abrupt floor work. The girls described the piece as a slow burn and they definitely had to dig deep as the intensity continued to build and the music switched from meditative to pulsating. It was a pleasant departure from the bombshells signature robust movement style.

### **Can't Sleep But Lightly by Gabrielle Lamb**

Dark Circles Contemporary Dance

March

WaterTower Theatre, Addison

New York-based choreographer Gabrielle Lamb challenged the dancers' mathematical skills as well as their artistic sensibilities in her piece for Dark Circles Contemporary Dance's showing at WaterTower Theatre's Detour Festival back in March. Methodical walks, balletic lines and alien-esque body shapes are woven throughout this cleverly crafted piece. What I liked most about this piece is its lack of physical partnering; instead the dancers relied on simple human contact to produce authentic connections with one another. It was a very trippy ride indeed and a complementary pairing of artistic minds.



Photo: Sharen Bradford/The Dancing Image

### **The Face of Water by Kimi Nikaidoh**

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Avant Chamber Ballet

April

Moody Performance Hall, Dallas

Nikaidoh used a range of emotions and the highs and lows within Argentine composer Osvaldo Gojilov's 2002 chamber piece *Tenebrae* to drive the movement in her new work for Avant

Chamber Ballet's 2018 Women's Choreography Project last April. Nikaidoh described the piece as more of an emotional journey focused primarily on hope and new beginnings, which was depicted in the longer, sweeter notes in the music. The combination of classical movements such as *pas de deus* and standard corps body lines and formations with Nikaidoh's penchant for subtle musical gesturing and unlikely body shapes was a delightful juxtaposition for these talented dancers. Add in the dancers' emotional conviction and you had a



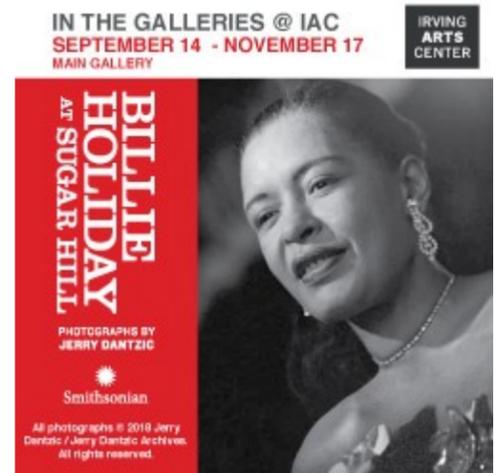
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