



## Getting Boston In Line With Contemporary Dance

August 15, 2013

By [WBUR Newsroom](#)



BOSTON — With one of the best contemporary dance festivals just on the other side of the state, Jacob’s Pillow, it is shame that there are not more contemporary dance offerings in the greater Boston area. [Urbanity Dance](#), led by founder Betsi Graves, has been working to fill that void for the last five years and this weekend will shine a light on several up-and-coming troupes at the Paramount Center.

Graves says that when she founded Urbanity Dance, she met with several mentors who advised her “not to make any big plans” since new nonprofit companies rarely make it past three years. So when the company hit the three year milestone she breathed a sigh of relief. Since then, the burgeoning company signed a lease on its South



Betsi Graves. (Courtesy, Urbanity Dance)

End location and opened a school – which right now is hosting 55 students in their summer intensive dance program.

It’s also bringing dance into the community; an hour after I spoke with her, Graves was headed to a juvenile detention center in Quincy to work with the kids there. There are also residencies at six public schools and a program with the Community Health Alliance for kids at risk for health issues like diabetes.

BCDF Promo 2013



Also under the umbrella of community outreach is the [Contemporary Dance Festival](#), which is being presented for the second time this weekend at the Paramount Center. After several years of touring to festivals around the company with Urbanity, Graves realized that there wasn't a festival in Boston for dancers and audiences to enjoy the work being done in contemporary dance around the country. The Contemporary Dance Festival fosters the community of contemporary dancers in Boston and beyond. Many of the companies coming to the festival are smaller, emerging companies, who'll be getting a chance to perform in the beautifully appointed Paramount Center, complete with the outstanding technical support the Paramount is known for.



Urbanity Dance performing "You Are Human." (Michael Seamans)

Over 30 companies will descend upon Boston for the festival, which starts Friday with a day of workshops and panels while Saturday will feature a full day of performances. Future Boston is sponsoring two: one on the Boston arts ecosystem, and the other on best practices for directors, board members, and administrators. On top of that, many of the featured choreographers and dancers are teaching free classes – open to intermediate to advanced dancers 14 years old and up.

The first year of the festival, Urbanity received 40 applications from companies and choreographers and presented two performances. This year, they received over 100 applications. Due to the strong turnout, they're upping the ante and presenting three performances on Saturday: a noon performance featuring local artists, and 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. programs featuring emerging companies

from as far away as Alaska.



Corey Baker and Meghan McGrath performing Jean Appolon Expression's "Petro." (Liza Voll )

“Boston is hungry for showcases, people are trying to discover the next big thing,” says Graves. With companies ranging from [Jean Appolon Expressions](#), a Boston company focused on Haitian folkloric dance, to [ELSCO](#), a modern dance company led by Ellenore Scott (“So You Think You Can Dance,” “Smash”), to Gillmer Duran and the [Alaska Dance Theatre](#), there are Urbanity offers plenty of chances to find out exactly what the next big thing could be.

#### Alaska Dance Theatre's Solos & Arias 2012



*Robin Allen LaPlante is a local arts administrator who is skilled in the mystical arts of social media, ballet, and arts marketing. When not writing, she is baking delicious goodies, camping with her family, or playing with the crazy theater-makers at [New Exhibition Room](#).*

*This program aired on August 15, 2013. The audio for this program is not available.*

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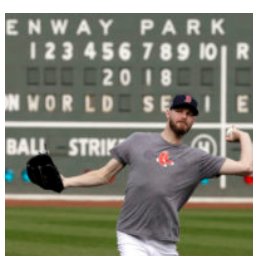
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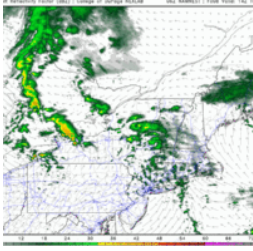
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### 3 Up, 3 Down: What To Know About The Red Sox-Dodgers World Series

Let the late nights and bleary-eyed days begin (again). The World Series begins Tuesday night at Fenway.



### Forecast: Heading To Fenway? Bundle Up

Showers should be over by the time the World Series begins, but it will be chilly.

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### 'They Immediately See Gangs': From El Salvador To Boston, Helping Young People Shake Stigma And Feel Safe

For two organizations working thousands of miles apart, that is their shared goal: to show young people a vision of their futures beyond the gangs.

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### The Day That Nana And I Went 'Psycho'

At the end of the movie I remember my grim-faced grandmother saying, "Well, that isn't what I expected." Nor did anyone else in America, writes Ed Siegel.

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### In Lyric Stage's 'The Roommate,' Comedy Cohabits With Reinvention

As in her other works, Jen Silverman asserts here that female people can crawl out of the neatly labeled, passive ruts of their lives.

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### Gender Politics And Male Dominance — In Kindergarten

At back-to-school night for her kindergartner, Hinda Mandell discovered that children are taught to read male pronouns and possessors well before they learn the female versions.

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### Transcript: Nurses Debate Ballot Question 1 On 'Radio Boston'

Radio Boston holds a full-hour debate on Question 1, the Massachusetts ballot measure about nurse ratios.

CommonHealth Oct 22, 2018