

BODYTRAFFIC: The new kid on the block

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Tina Finkelman Berkett and the Bodytraffic ensemble.

Photo by Tomasz Rossa.

In case you haven't noticed, modern dance is booming, with new high-caliber companies springing up in major cities around the country and quickly arranging successful nationwide tours. [BODYTRAFFIC](#) is one of those newbies, founded in 2007 by dancers Tina Finkelman Berkett and Lillian Rose Barbeito, and the company will be making its Dance Celebration debut at the Annenberg Center on April 3-5.

According to Berkett, when she and Barbeito migrated from New York to L.A., "We both felt a lack of quality

contemporary dance in the area. We perceived a strong demand in Los Angeles for work that is both entertaining and fulfilling." They founded BODYTRAFFIC, serving as co-artistic directors and regular company dancers. (Barbeito has since retired as an onstage dancer, while Berkett continues in both roles and will be featured in one of the new pieces set to be seen at the Annenberg.)

One big difference

BODYTRAFFIC is different from many smaller dance companies in that, from the beginning, they have not had a house (or "resident") choreographer. "We choose to work with choreographers who are distinctive, versatile — and diverse," explains Berkett. "We bring in the best people from around the

world to create works with us that are both entertaining and challenging — as well as, when possible, being accessible to new fans of modern dance.”

That approach has worked well, earning accolades and an ardent following in their home city of Los Angeles almost from the beginning. The company made *Dance* magazine’s list for Top 25 to Watch in 2013.

A MacArthur grant, Martha Graham, Michael Jackson, and more

The current program coming to the Annenberg promises to live up to BODYTRAFFIC’s short but sparkling reputation for both quality and entertainment value. The program of all-new works kicks off with prominent Israeli-American choreographer [Barak Marshall](#)’s piece, *and at midnight the green bride floated through the village square...*, which features an eclectic sound score ranging from traditional Yiddish, Latino and Judeo-Arabic sayings.

Recent MacArthur “genius” Award-winner [Kyle Abraham](#) follows up with *Kollide*, his first new piece since winning the MacArthur. This is described as a fusion “of ballet and hip hop in a fluid, sensual style...that draws on the vocabularies of Merce Cunningham, Martha Graham...and Michael Jackson.”

Wrapping the evening up will be *o2Joy* by [Richard Siegal](#) (a winner of the Munich Dance Award), which pays a cheerful tribute to American jazz standards by, among others, Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, and Glenn Miller.

BODYTRAFFIC is coming to the Annenberg Center, 37th and Walnut Streets, Philadelphia, on Thursday, April 3 at 7:30pm; Friday April 4 at 4pm and 8pm; and Saturday, April 5 at 2pm and 8pm. For tickets and more information, call 215-898-3900 or visit annenbergcenter.org.

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