

About CONTRA-TIEMPO

CONTRA-TIEMPO is a non-profit, Los Angeles-based dance company, founded and directed by Ana Maria Alvarez. CONTRA-TIEMPO is dedicated to transforming the world through dance. The company builds community, facilitates dialogue and moves youth to imagine what is possible in the world.

CONTRA-TIEMPO fuses Salsa, Afro-Cuban, contemporary urban and abstract dance theater, to create an invigorating blend of physically intense and politically astute performance work. Their unique Urban Latin Dance Theater brings to life voices that are not traditionally heard on the concert stage. While their performances are consistently electrifying, what sets the company apart most is its unique relationship to its own community. CONTRA-TIEMPO is, much like the community it reaches, a tapestry. Its company members—professional dancers and artists—are also immigrants, teachers, activists, organizers and movers of all types living and working in Los Angeles. Each company member lives, expresses, and struggles within the varied and complex political and personal landscapes that Ana Maria seeks to address in her work.

The company has several large-scale performance works, many shorter pieces, dance residency programs for youth, and master classes for all ages. CONTRA-TIEMPO's work has been shared all over the United States and Latin America.

For teens and pre-teens, the company's programs address social, political and race issues through movement and through traditional cultural dance forms. For younger audiences the company focuses on using the body as a tool for communication and working together as a community. The company is dedicated to working with underserved populations of young people. CONTRA-TIEMPO creates dialogue and greater understanding across populations, in particular around issues of resistance and power. CONTRA-TIEMPO is committed to creating meaningful work that can be enjoyed by a broad range of audiences regardless of age, class or cultural background.

WHAT IS DANCE THEATER?

CONTRA TIEMPO's work isn't only dance set to music. It includes aspects of theatricality that enhance the choreography. Their performances include spoken word—both live and recorded—like poetry, historical text, and personal narratives from company members, along with live music, theatrical props, projected images or video elements.

ACTIVITY

Movement Conversation

In pairs, students improvise a conversation in dance. One dancer begins by creating a short movement, freezing when the movement is complete. The other dancer responds with his/her own movement reply. This continues back and forth, with movements growing more complex. Remind students to wait for their partner to freeze completely before responding.

More advanced students can explore using different amounts of space between partners. Try near, far, above, below, around, etc., or experiment using interconnected movements.



About *Agua Furiosa*

Agua Furiosa, CONTRA-TIEMPO's newest full length work, challenges audiences to confront harsh realities of race and justice in our country. Inspired by Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Oya, the Afro-Cuban deity of wind and storms, artistic director and choreographer Ana Maria Alvarez, harnesses her unique Urban-Latin movement approach to create a visually stunning and thought provoking dance performance. *Agua Furiosa* merges call and response, a live vocalist, and fierce physicality with various representations of water.

Much of this work incorporates ideas from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. If you haven't read or seen that play, it might be helpful to know a bit about a few of the characters: The figure of Ella in *Agua Furiosa* is based on Sycorax, a witch in *The Tempest*. She never actually appears on stage in Shakespeare's work, but other characters talk about her, and we learn that she is deeply feared, and misunderstood. Here, CONTRA-TIEMPO gives her a body and a voice as Ella. Caliban is her orphaned son, enslaved and abused by other characters. Caliban is often played as a wild man, or a deformed beast, something less than human. While he is depicted as a villain—especially compared to the conventional 'civilized' standards of the other characters—in many ways, Caliban is powerless, and simply reacting to emotional and physical needs the only way he knows how. *Agua Furioso* includes many different versions and representations of Caliban.

In *Agua Furiosa*, water represents both injustice as a basic necessity that can be withheld, wasted or polluted by those in power, and a great equalizer as an unstoppable force that can prove deadly to anyone. At its heart, *Agua Furiosa* is an exploration of—and an antidote to—the selfish arrogance that allows people to believe that we can control nature, or dominate other humans for our own benefit.

Layers of Sound, Layers of Meaning

The score for *Agua Furiosa* is a complex blend of recorded music, live music, spoken word, and manipulated sounds, collected and arranged by 'sonic archivist' d. Sabela grimes.

Just as hip hop artists sample existing music, layering it with new work for a unique creation, CONTRA TIEMPO samples movement from a wide range of styles to create a unique dance vocabulary, and an array of texts, recordings, historic speeches, and conversation to develop a sonic landscape that adds to the meaning of their movement.

Here are some of the writers, thinkers and quotes that inspired the work, and that you may hear throughout the piece.

Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

"What cares these roarers for the name of king?" (the roaring, stormy sea doesn't know or care if you are royalty)

Chief Si'ahl, 1855 Speech

An important leader of Native peoples in the Pacific Northwest, he is credited with this address on ecological responsibility and respect of Native Americans' land rights.

"How can you buy or sell the sky – the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us. We do not own the freshness of the air or the sparkle of the water. How can you buy them from us? [...] Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people."

Audre Lorde

Lorde was a writer and activist, working from the early 1960s until her death in 1992. Her poems and essays focused on civil rights issues, feminism, and the expression of black female identity.

"I urge each one of us here to reach down into that deep place of knowledge inside herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives there. See whose face it wears. Then the personal as the political can begin to illuminate all our choices."

DIG DEEPER

Links, Videos, Further Reading & Discussion Topics

Learn more about the [members of CONTRA-TIEMPO](#).

[See videos of the company in action](#)—both in performance and at community engagement events.

Check out [this fascinating TEDTalk](#) about the connections between Shakespeare and hip-hop, and the cultural power of language.

Discussion Topics

What does it mean to say that “movement has meaning”?

Can dance tell a story or present an idea? Can it make you feel a certain way? Why or Why not?

Music and language are often the inspiration behind the movement in CONTRA-TIEMPO’s work. What quotes or lyrics inspire you?



DANCE VOCABULARY

Modern (or Contemporary) Dance

A dance form developed in the early 20th century as a reaction to classical ballet. Dancers and choreographers use their own technique, creativity, and body to create new dances and try to be as original as they can.

Movement Vocabulary

A set of movements or a style of dancing which is specific to, or characteristic of, a choreographer, dancer, or dance company.

Phrase

A short combination of movements. This is the smallest unit of movement in an entire dance. Phrases are put together to create movement sequences.

Repertory

All the works—specific plays, dances, musical pieces, etc.—that a company performs.

Score

An organized set of notations of all of the instrumental and/or vocal parts of a musical composition

Dynamics

The variations of energy, intensity or emotional quality in the performance of dance.

You're the Critic: Performance Review

Put yourself in the shoes of a dance critic and tell us about your concert experience. In 2-3 short paragraphs, review your experience at this performance. Think about the following areas when writing your review.

- Did the company perform work that was engaging or interesting?
- How did the costumes, lighting and set contribute to the performance?
- How did the score or sound design contribute to the performance?
- What was your favorite piece or section?
- What did the movement make feel?
- What is your overall impression? Can you pick one word to describe it?

If you need some more help, check the newspaper for dance reviews in the Arts section. Read a few to see how they are structured, what is included and what is not.

We'd love to hear your feedback - send us your reviews!

As an integral part of the Performing Arts Series, APPlause! matinees offer a variety of performances at venues across the Appalachian State University campus that feature university-based artists as well as local, regional and world-renowned professional artists. These affordable performances offer access to a wide variety of art disciplines for K-12 students. The series also offers the opportunity for students from the Reich College of Education to view a field trip in action without having to leave campus.

Among the 2015-2016 series performers, you will find those who will also be featured in [The Schaefer Center Presents](#), along with professional artists chosen specifically for our student audience as well as performances by campus groups.

Before you arrive . . .



Familiarize your students with what it means to be a great audience member by introducing these theatre etiquette basics:

- Arrive early enough to find your seats and settle in before the show begins (20-30 minutes).
- Remember to turn your electronic devices OFF so they do not disturb the performers or other audience members.
- Remember to sit appropriately and to stay quiet so that the audience members around you can enjoy the show too.