

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Aidan Un

Staying Passionate About Dance

by Kristi Yeung

When the coronavirus pandemic forced dance classes online, [Pasión y Arte](#) artistic director Elba Hevia y Vaca was concerned that the percussive elements of flamenco dance wouldn't translate through a screen. To stay connected to her students, she needed to teach a different kind of dance—one with less complicated footwork. She turned to sevillana, a celebratory folk dance that originated in Castile, and started teaching classes over Zoom every Saturday morning. *Sevillana Get Togethers 2020* at the Fringe Festival was the class's culminating show.

Each of the four prerecorded videos features student footage, brief dance and cultural lessons, and guest performances. The student dancers joyfully perform sevillana choreography in their living rooms, in front of their houses, or in Zoom's whimsical digital backgrounds. Hevia y Vaca, dressed in a vibrant red hat and vest lined with golden fringe, passionately explains the four *coplas*, or parts, of sevillana. She also reviews elements of the dance's technique, music, and origins. Two of the videos incorporate a brief dance lesson with Hevia y Vaca and [Leilani Chirino](#). These demonstrations are quick, showing how to identify, rather than perform, the steps.

The guest artists bring dynamic energy to the last three videos. In a YouTube-style split-screen performance, singer [Barbara Martinez](#) appears in six onscreen tiles and does a different musical task in each—expressively singing, clapping, snapping, hitting a tambourine, brushing a basket, and shaking a cylinder. The song she creates reappears in the next guest performance, featuring side-by-side clips of dancers [Xianix Barrera](#) and [Laura Peralta](#), whose firm steps are made more powerful by their expressive faces. The final video includes two transportive performances of dancer [Sol Koreaus](#) and guitarist [Rafael Brunn](#) showing off their impressive crafts in the streets of Barcelona.

There were a few small technological hiccups: the second video release was delayed, and the final performance was changed from a live-stream event to a prerecorded video. The videos also showcased student testimonials, which felt out of place. Nevertheless, *Sevillana Get Togethers 2020*

was a celebratory series of premieres, illustrating how a group of Philadelphia-based artists and students turned to an unfamiliar form of dance to maintain their passion for movement during the pandemic. As Hevia y Vaca says in the final video, “Art can really bring our higher selves.”

[Sevillana Get Togethers 2020](#), Pasión y Arte, 2020 Fringe Festival, September 17, 24, October 1.

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