Traci Bartlow, artistic director of Starchild Dance. Photo by RJ Muna, courtesy San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival
10 best in dance 2015

(in chronological order)

1. “Giselle,” San Francisco Ballet (Jan. 29): Bolshoi-trained Maria Kochetkova gave us the complete character — the innocent peasant girl and the spirit who redeems from beyond the grave — and she broke our hearts in the process.

2. Kyle Abraham, “Pavement” (Feb. 19): A leading member of the younger generation of African American choreographers paints a movement portrait of contemporary urban life in all its malaise, indifference and cruelty.


4. Alexander Ekman’s “Episode 31,” the Joffrey Ballet (March 14): This Scandinavian import exuded some of the zany cross-genre wit associated with the Joffrey of its vintage years.

5. “Promethean Fire,” Paul Taylor Dance Company (April 16): Even with the inevitable cast changes brought by time, this haunting response to 9/11 has remained Taylor’s most galvanizing and hopeful classic.

6. “Pupil Suitem,” Gallim Dance, Walking Distance Dance Festival (June 5): The local debut of this Brooklyn company, a kind of offshoot of Batsheva, combined far-out humor with a striking visual sense.

7. Starchild Dance, San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival (June 13): Credit Artistic Director Traci Bartlow and Ray Davis for this snazzy re-creation of dances from the Harlem Renaissance, Lindy Hop and all.

8. “Broken Open,” Smuin Ballet (Sept. 18): Choreographer Amy Seiwert’s growing mastery in moving large groups of dancers is one of the best reasons to attend this chamber company’s performances.

9. Twyla Tharp’s 50th anniversary tour (Oct. 16): The veteran choreographer was back on form with premieres set to Bach and early American jazz, proving you can go home again if you have style.

10. DanceFAR benefit (Nov. 10): The performances from a starry roster ranged wide and generally thrilled, but it was the sight of the dance community rising to a universal challenge that impressed most.

— Allan Ulrich