

# San Francisco Chronicle

## SF Ballet, Paul Taylor Dance among best of dance 2015

By Allan Ulrich  
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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.
3. **“Dances at a Gathering,”** San Francisco Ballet (Feb. 26): The revival of Jerome Robbins’ great romantic classic found the company ingratiatingly musical and emotionally vulnerable.
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*