Essential Arts & Culture: Museums facing fires, Misty Copeland onstage, and Broadway's new 'Hamilton'

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By Carolina A. Miranda

The downtown Los Angeles skyline peers through smoke from the Skirball fire as seen from Bel-Air, near the Getty Center. (Genaro Molina / Los Angeles Times)

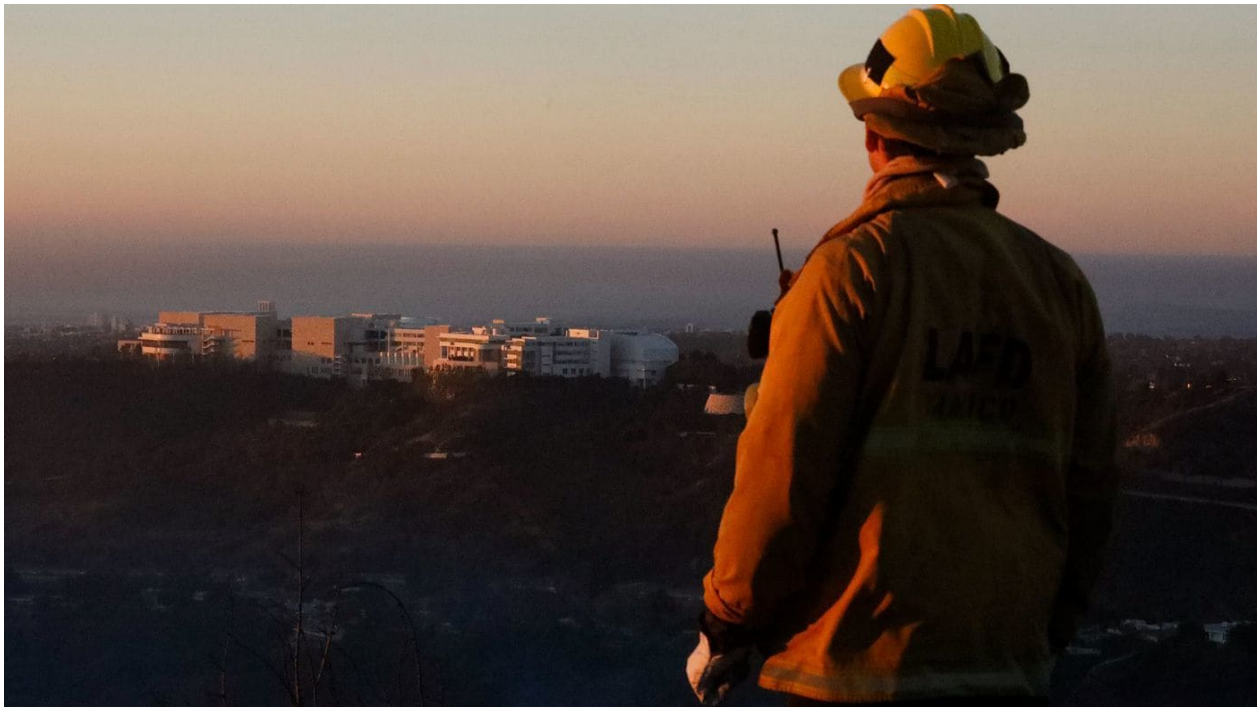
Fires and art. Misty Copeland lands in Southern California. And a new lead for "Hamilton." I'm **Carolina A. Miranda**, staff writer for the Los Angeles Times, with the week's most important culture news:

CULTURE AND THE FIRES

Both the **Getty Center** and the **Skirball Cultural Center** were temporarily shut down due to the **Skirball fire**, which as of Friday morning had consumed roughly 475 acres. But while the **Getty** closed, the art — including an exhibition of priceless pre-Columbian art — stayed behind. The buildings were designed with maximum fire safety in mind — from **reserve water tanks** to the regular employment of **goats** to keep the hillsides clear of brush. Los Angeles Times

Frances Anderton also explores the **Getty's** fire-conscious design. KCRW Design and Architecture

Both the **Getty** and the **Skirball** re-opened to the public on Friday.



Firefighter Bobby D'Amico looks out over the Getty Center while monitoring the Skirball fire. (Genaro Molina / Los Angeles Times)

We are sending all **the best vibes** to the folks around **SoCal** who have lost homes, belongings and loved ones in the fires. For all the latest **updates** on containment, evacuations and more, see our **fires live blog**. Los Angeles Times

CHATTING WITH MISTY COPELAND

American Ballet Theatre principal dancer **Misty Copeland** is returning to her native California to dance a new staging of **"The Nutcracker"** at the **Segerstrom Center for the Arts**. The new production, she tells The Times' **Deborah Vankin**, is one of her favorites. "The dancing is just so free," she says. "It's not like the traditional version." Los Angeles Times

Misty Copeland, who grew up in San Pedro, will dance the role of Clara in American Ballet Theatre's "The Nutcracker." (Carolyn Cole / Los Angeles Times)

Speaking of holiday ballets: The Times' **Jessica Gelt** has a report on the young dancers who will appear in the **Miami City Ballet**'s rendition of **"The Nutcracker"** at the **Dorothy Chandler Pavilion**. Warning: Story contains cuteness. Los Angeles Times

And since we're on the subject of dance: Contributing reviewer **Laura Bleiberg** took in the L.A. debut of the Cuba-based **Malpaso Dance Company**, part of a series of performances connected with **Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA**. The dancers, she reports, "were exceptional." Los Angeles Times

Malpaso Dance Company performs the new piece "Face the Torrent" at the Music Center. (The Music Center)

A NEW HAMILTON

"It's an out-of-body experience, but I don't know what body I'm going to land in." That's what **Michael Luwoye** had to say about being named the next actor to play**Alexander Hamilton** in the **Broadway** production of **"Hamilton."** Luwoye, the Alabama-raised son of Nigerian immigrants, is currently playing the role in the touring production of the show at the **Hollywood Pantages Theater**. He tells **Jessica Gelt** about his unlikely history as an actor and his disastrous first audition for the part. Los Angeles Times

Michael Luwoye will play the lead role in "Hamilton" on Broadway. (Irfan Khan / Los Angeles Times)

Plus: **Gelt**, who has been very busy this week, also has a profile of**Rory O'Malley**, who lends a humorous touch to the role of **King George III** in **"Hamilton"** — first on Broadway and now in L.A. Since he got the role, he says, "it's been like being shot out of a rocket." Los Angeles Times

Rory O'Malley as King George III in "Hamilton." (Joan Marcus)

A STRANDED BAND

The best new musical of 2017, says Times theater critic **Charles McNulty**, was inspired by an unlikely work: the 2007 Israeli indie film **"The Band's Visit,"** about an Egyptian police orchestra that mistakenly travels to the wrong town for a gig. "'**The Band's Visit**' is more music drama than splashy musical," writes **McNulty**, who has been filing dispatches from **Broadway**. "More compact than 'Fun Home,' 'Hamilton,' and '[Natasha, Pierre & the Great Comet of 1812',] this 90-minute show is every bit as resonant and original." Los Angeles Times

A scene from the "The Band's Visit," an unlikely story that has made for a stage work of "poetic delicacy." (Matthew Murphy)

AN EARLY WOMAN COMPOSER

The 12th century Benedictine abbess **Hildegard of Bingen** was the first composer in the **Western canon** who continues to exert considerable influence — especially in recent years, as her work has experienced a revival of sorts. Now her compositions have reached the **Monday Evening Concerts** series, reports Times classical music critic **Mark Swed** — kicking off the season with "rapturous hymns and songs sung with blinding luminosity." Los Angeles Times

James Baker conducts the Talea Ensemble at the Monday Evening Concerts series at Zipper Hall. (Kent Nishimura / Los Angeles Times)

BEAUTIFUL GOLD

For millennia, **indigenous cultures** throughout the Americas made priceless works that evoked status and luxury — often crafted from materials such as gold, feathers and jade. **"Golden Kingdoms: Luxury and Legacy in the Ancient Americas"** at the **Getty Museum** (part of **PST: LA/LA**) manages to bring some of these precious objects together in a show that spans thousands of years and cultures (including **Moche**, **Wari**, **Inca**, **Chiriquí**, **Zapotec** and **Mixtec**). There are wonderful surprises, writes Times art critic **Christopher Knight**. And the show's "rich context" makes familiar objects "sing anew." Los Angeles Times

Face ornaments depicting Quetzalcoatl made by a Mayan artisan in 800-1100.

Face ornaments depicting Quetzalcoatl made by a Mayan artisan in 800-1100. (Michael Cardinali / Peabody Museum)

A VISUAL VOYAGE

For much of Western history, the conventional wisdom has been that **scientific discovery** was mainly taking place within the confines of nations such as England, Germany and Italy. But the **Spanish colonization** of the Americas resulted in an unprecedented level of research and image-making. This week I report on the **PST: LA/LA** exhibition **"Visual Voyages: Images of Latin American Nature from Columbus to Darwin"** at the Huntington, which gathers an array of unusual and historic colonial art from that era, including a sci-fi **pineapple** and a **"bilingual" map** featuring both indigenous and European

traditions. Los Angeles Times

A 16th century map of Guaxtepec features both indigenous and Western motifs at the Huntington. (Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection / UT Austin)

A MUSEUM TO FAILURE

Colgate lasagna, the **DeLorean DMC-12**, **Coca-Cola Blāk** and **Trump the Game**. Those are just some of the objects in the **Museum of Failure**, a popular traveling exhibition that has opened in L.A.'s **A+D Architecture and Design Museum**. "It's hilarious to think of the Museum of Failure as a success," show organizer **Dr. Samuel West** tells The Times' **Deborah Vankin**. "It's a nerdy exhibition — a collection of innovation failures — and I'm still getting used to the fact that people are interested in it." Los Angeles Times

Colgate's beef lasagna frozen dinner is part of an exhibition about failure at the A+D museum. (Dr. Samuel West)

IN OTHER NEWS...

— The **40th Kennedy Center Honors**, which paid tribute to **LL Cool J, Lionel Richie, Gloria Estefan, Norman Lear** and **Carmen de Lavallade** went down without a hitch — and without **President Trump**. Los Angeles Times

Recipients of Kennedy Center Honors (clockwise from top left): LL Cool J, Lionel Richie, Gloria Estefan, Norman Lear and Carmen de Lavallade. (Getty Images)

— **Trump**'s possible appearance at the opening of two new museums in **Jackson, Miss.** — one dedicated to civil rights — has led to controversy. U.S. **Reps. John Lewis** and **Bennie Thompson** have said they will bow out if the President is in attendance. Jackson Free Press, Politically Georgia

— Ancient **Native American petroglyphs** could be lost if Trump reduces the size of **Bears Ears National Monument** in Utah. Artnet

— Critic **Tyler Green**, who is at work on a book about early Western photographer **Carleton E. Watkins**, writes about the founding vision of the U.S. national parks system. Places Journal

— Four men have accused **Metropolitan Opera** musical director **James Levine** of sexually abusing them. The conductor has now responded in a written statement, calling the accusations "unfounded." New York Times

— Following the **Art Newspaper**'s report on the ways in which the **Sackler family** (the family behind **Purdue**, the makers of **Oxycontin**) has influenced the cultural landscape, **Colin Moynihan** looks at the issue of cultural institutions vetting their donors. New York Times

— **Erika Rothenberg**'s installation **"The Road to Hollywood"** at the **Hollywood & Highland** shopping mall had an element that consisted of a daybed removed in the wake of sex harassment allegations. It is now back. Los Angeles Times

— Members of the **Pasadena Symphony and Pops** have voted to authorize a **strike** for higher wages that could put popular holiday concerts in peril. Los Angeles Times

David Lockington leads the Pasadena Symphony in the spring.

David Lockington leads the Pasadena Symphony in the spring. (Marcus Yam / Los Angeles Times)

— From the Department of the Sky is Also Blue: A study reveals a "shocking" lack of **gender diversity** in **architecture firms** at their most senior levels. Dezeen

— The **USC Pacific Asia Museum** re-opens after a year-long closure with an exhibition that tracks the cultural ties between Mexico and China. Los Angeles Times

— L.A.'s **Department of Cultural Affairs** has selected a class of **"cultural trailblazers,"** chosen for their "contribution to the community and caliber of their work." Congrats to all! DCA

— A look at the extended family that has made L.A.'s **Underground Museum** a rising cultural force. W Magazine

— Plus an interesting essay on theorist **Stuart Hall** and the ways in which we **evaluate culture**. New Yorker

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST...

The **garbage incinerator** that frequently gets mistaken for a **theme park**. Stuff

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