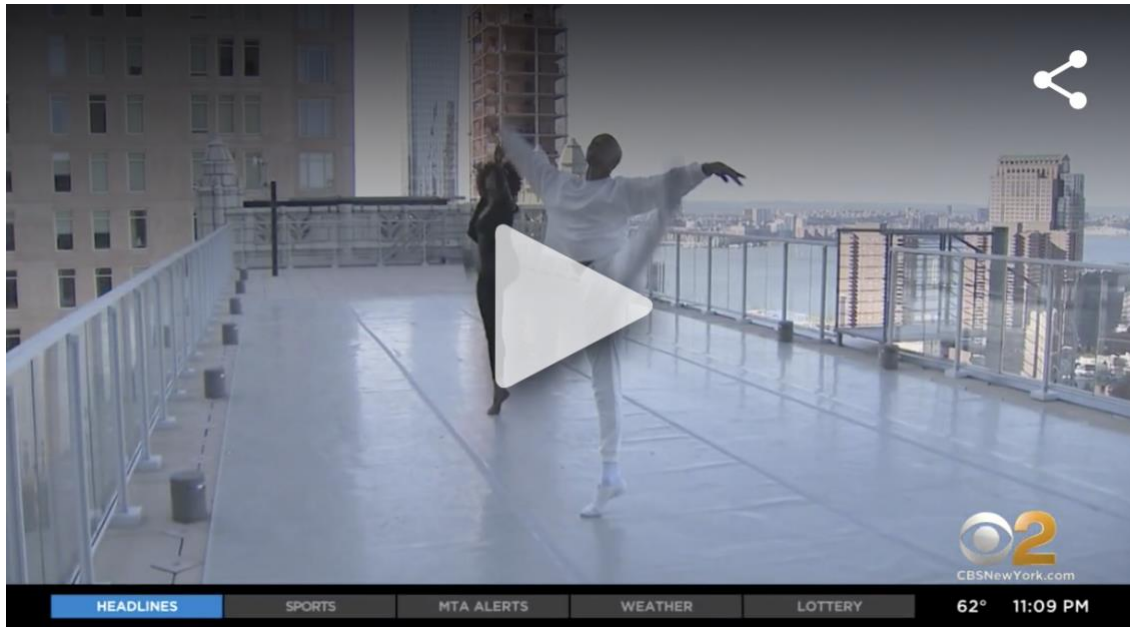




Performing Artists In NYC Finding Ways To Return To The Spotlight As Shutdown Continues

By: Dave Carlin

September 22, 2020



Watch here: <https://newyork.cbslocal.com/2020/09/22/performing-arts-nyc-coronavirus-shutdown/> (2 minutes)

Thousands of creative artists are fighting for their survival as the entertainment industry remains mostly shut down, but new ways of working are starting to pop up, along with a stronger push for federal relief. A New York City rooftop becomes a stage. No curtain rises, but the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater returns for a season that debuts new works and reinvents classics like “Pas de Duke,” as in Duke Ellington, by putting them online. The videos were filmed atop landmarks, like the Woolworth Building.

“My hope is to definitely get back on stage, whatever stage means,” dancer Yannick LeBrun told CBS2’s Dave Carlin.

Performers are getting back to doing what they love, slowly but surely. LeBrun, Jacqueline Green and the company are back after a long break and want more done for all the city’s performers.

“Keep them going and motivating them,” Green said.

Performer Jena VanElslander was last seen on Broadway in the musical “King Kong.” “I do have optimism. It will come back. It will look different,” she said.

Lately, her rehearsal space is a mirrored entrance to a Times Square hotel. She is finding work in pop-up events on city streets. More and more performers engage audiences at these events, which are not publicized ahead of time. When there is pay, it’s usually low. So much more is needed, say the backers of a \$9 billion dollar federal aid package for the arts. Stand-up comedians and comedy club owners are demanding they soon be let back into their small venues at 25% capacity.

“We’re kind of the cockroaches of the arts,” comedian Christian Finnegan said. “But the thing about cockroaches is they’re indestructible.”

Joel Breitkopf, of Alchemy Properties, arranged for Woolworth Tower and Ailey to create both art and hope. “New York City always comes back,” he said.

This segment also aired on [CBS 2 News at 12pm](#) on September 23, 2020.