

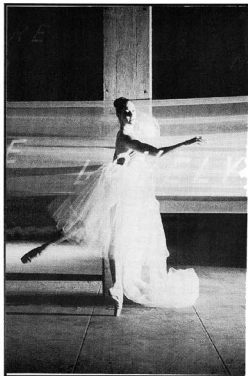
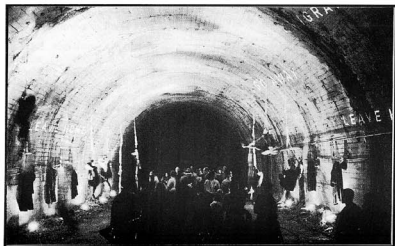
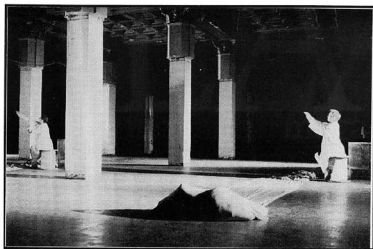
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L.A.'s top 10 list

The Coolest Things to Do in March



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ENTERTAINMENT

Daily Breeze

'Sub Versions' a stunning underground trip

By Jim Farber
DANCE CRITIC

Call it dance as archaeology, dance as theater of the absurd, dance as anatomy lesson, dance as laugh fest, dance as surrealist dreamscape.

Call it whatever you like, Heidi Duckler's latest site-specific creation, "Sub Versions," performed by her Collage Dance Company amid the derelict spaces of the once-grand Subway Terminal Building in downtown Los Angeles, is a tour de force.

It's a fascinating, mind-bending performance that takes the audience deep into the bowels of this building on an anatomic journey reminiscent of Raquel Welch's adventure in "Fantastic Voyage."

For more than 30 years, the Subway Terminal Building (built in 1925) served as the bustling downtown terminus of the Red Car line.

But when rail transit gave way to freeways, its lower floors were taken over by the Veteran's Administration, which promptly

sacked the place and transformed it into a rabbit warren of offices.

Little remains of its former glory, except the lobby, where a massive cast of Rodin's "Thinker" sits forever pondering the progress of man.

The rest is a ghost space, a genuine Los Angeles ruin, and "Sub Versions" offers a unique trip through its strata.

The script by Terry Wolverton, however, has more to do with human anatomy than the history of public transit in Los Angeles. It's designed as a walking tour through the human body.

Points of interest include: "The Story of Skin," "Don't Hold Your Breath," "Blood/Stream," "Live and Let Liver," "Easy to Digest," and ultimately a passage through "Death's Door."

Each stop, as its title implies, involves the audience in a different dance/theater experience as they are led deeper and deeper into the guts of the building; a realm of massive exposed beams, rusting air conditioning ducts,

STAGE REVIEW

"Sub Versions" by Collage Dance Company. Plays at 7 and 9 tonight (sold out), 8 p.m. Thursday, 7 and 9 p.m. March 31, April 1, 7 and 8. Subway Terminal Building, 417 S. Hill St., downtown Los Angeles. Tickets: \$20, \$15 for students and seniors. Free parking is available adjacent the building. Wear comfortable clothes and walking shoes. For information: 818-784-8669.

abandoned offices, and, climactically, the vast shadowy chasm of the old subway tunnel itself.

In one scene, an elegant ballerina (Josie Walsh) complete with white satin toe shoes and starched tutu, dances a pas de deux in and out of a forest of cement towers as her ugly-duckling alter ego, Elizabeth Nairn,

does her best to compete.

In another room, representing the stomach and painted Pepto-Bismol pink, Vince Hederman and Susan Kawashima perform a tea-for-two dance that's part gymnastic love-fest, part scarf-and-barf food fight.

One the most humorous sections is a decent into the bloodstream, where the audience is warned to watch out for clinging fat cells (dancers in baggy white outfits) that are clogging up the artery.

In "Perchance to Dream"—land everyone gets milk and cookies, as Kerry McGrath holds forth like a perverted Mother Goose reading nursery rhymes.

Throughout the performance Bryan Randall functions as Conductor, Chief Medical Officer and Guide. His friends just call him "The Brain."

In many ways "Sub Versions" doesn't really add up. Stylistically its parts are as disjointed as its locations, juxtaposing surreal encounters and abstract dance

movement with tongue-in-cheek comedy.

But whatever the performance lacks in cohesion and message, it more than makes up for with its stunning sense of visual bravura. It is a fascinating rite of passage set against a background no stage could approximate, skillfully conceived by Duckler and art director BJ Krivanek.

The fact that "Sub Versions" exists at all is a wonder.

With its multiple locations, lighting installations, amplified music score by Jac Redford and complicated dance requirements, this show has to be a logistical nightmare. But, to Duckler's credit, Thursday's performance ran like clockwork.

If you've never experienced a site-specific performance, "Sub Versions" is a great place to start. It's a little stepping through the looking glass with Federico Fellini as your guide.