

Laura Carruthers is 'Grace Fury:' The dancer that dares us to dream

By: Jana Ritter | Aug 13, 2016 | 3 weeks ago



Laura Carruthers

Laura Carruthers is the [Herbie Hancock](#) of dance. A performer, choreographer, director, producer, and master visionary who is breaking the barriers of traditional techniques and breaking new ground with her own hybrid style of dance and artistic collaboration. A style that fuses the most challenging and rigid worlds of ballet and Scottish Highland dancing into its own celebrated form, and combines the cutting edge artistry of musicians, cinematographers, special effects, and stage designers to create a fully immersive, fantastical experience that is captivating audiences worldwide.

Like other great innovators throughout time, Carruthers first became a master of her many crafts before challenging the paradigms and pioneering her own artistic path. Growing up in Southern California, she began taking ballet, tap, and tumbling classes at the young age of four and her natural talent quickly advanced her through the ranks. At the same, she was also attending [Highland festivals](#) to watch her father compete as a Scottish athlete and soon found herself wandering off to watch the dance performances celebrating her heritage. By age seven, she was officially enrolled in Highland Dance lessons and over the next ten years she would become a world-renowned Scottish Highland dancer and six-time national champion.

“The technique in Highland dancing isn’t as obvious as the thunderous, clogging, tap rhythm of Irish Step dancing,” she explains in a recent interview with [AXS](#). “It involves more finely detailed footwork and controlled arm movements that require a certain level of physical strength, leg development, and hip rotation to carry out in a state of perpetual spring. It’s leg power and lung power offset by elegant, full-bodied coordination and it takes patience and perseverance to grow into...much like ballet.”

In fact, it was Carruthers' remarkable skill as a Highland dancer that allowed her to make the seamless transition back into the world of ballet and land a spot with the esteemed company, [Ballet Arizona](#). At the same, she was also studying theater and film at [ASU's Liberal Arts & Sciences](#) program and she found herself beginning to question why dance or any form of art has to be boxed into specific criteria of styles and techniques. She had also reached a point where she wanted to break free from the competitive, self-involved world of a performer and explore the creative freedom of collaborating with others. Then, all the elements started coming together and her vision of aesthetic style, creative process, and artistic philosophy began to take shape.

The artistic director of Ballet Arizona, Michael Uthoff, asked her to collaborate on choreographing a piece that combined her Scottish Highland expertise with his own concept for a solo performance. Not only did the fusion of dance styles go over extremely well with critics and audiences, Carruthers was asked to perform the number repeatedly both in studio and on stage. Then, Riverdance began bursting onto the scene and grabbing audiences worldwide. And although it was heralded as a full Celtic variety show, Carruthers couldn't help but notice how it neglected the Scots.

“I realized audiences were more enthralled with the audible, foot-rendered rhythmic style of Irish step dancing and only dancers could really appreciate the more intricate, technically detailed style of Highland dance in its traditional form,” she explains. “At that point, I recognized my new mission and purpose as a dancer and an artist. To bring Scottish Highland dance back into the spotlight in a modern, more integrative context.”

Within a few years, she had rounded up a team of dancers, musicians, singers and production professionals from the worlds of ballet, Highland dancing, theater, and film, and together they embarked on a collaborative journey through multiple mediums of art. A series of projects finally lead to the world premiere tour of “Fire and Grace,” which sold out major venues such as Orpheum Theatre (Phoenix, AZ), Civic Theatre (San Diego, CA), Cashman Theatre (Las Vegas, NV) and UCLA's Royce Hall in Los Angeles and skyrocketed Carruthers to fame with high critical acclaim. Now she is preparing to debut her most ambitious project yet, in the fall of 2016.

“Grace Fury” is a feature length, dance infused media scape with Carruthers leading an all-star cast of dancers from major companies and Broadway productions in a musical montage of Celtic, Contemporary and Classical dance. Shot with five Panasonic VariCams, the narrative story interweaves between finished stage performances, documentary style behind the scenes footage and clips from Carruthers past projects to present an autobiographical journey of her 20-year evolution as a performer and innovator.

“Musically and choreographically, ‘Grace Fury’ is my ultimate expression of raw, rebellious and refined,” says Carruthers. “It jumps between different styles of music and dance in a playful, provocative manner that challenges traditional paradigms and through the performance, the playfulness is brought into order as the evolution of an artist takes shape. Through blessing and tragedy, mystery and humility, ambition and sacrifice, uniqueness and common bond, ‘Grace Fury’ not only prevails in her own mission to touch our culture, she delivers a socio-political message inspiring everyone to step out of the box and create their own way.”

To find out more about Laura Carruthers and the upcoming debut of “Grace Fury,” go to the official website: www.lauracarruthers.com

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