

## Local

### Zombies on the lawn

# 'Thriller' flash mob dance at the Sunken Garden synchs up with events around the county and the world

By JOSEF WOODARD, NEWS-PRESS CORRESPONDENT

October 29, 2017 5:52 AM

The Courthouse Sunken Garden is a local property accustomed to hosting large groups of well-dressed — or generally unusually-dressed people — as a widely coveted wedding destination of choice.

On Saturday, immediately following a sartorially lavish wedding event, a very different and hyper-special dress code, or attitude, was prevailing on the property's vast lawn.

The general motif was on the ghoulish, zombie-fied side. Badly stitched scars, deathly pallor, shadowy eye sockets, ratty fishnet stockings and skeletal chic were the norm here.

Ugly was the new beautiful, especially promptly at 3 p.m., when the seemingly ragtag but actually carefully rehearsed zombie troupe launched into the Santa Barbara component of the "Thill the World" dance taking place all around the country and the world, at precisely the same time.

"Thanks for showing up and looking so bad — Michael Jackson 'bad,'" bellowed the announcer, ticking off the precise countdown to dance-timing ecstasy. As the familiar slow-brew opening of Michael Jackson's 1984 hit "Thriller" creaked into gear and into the beloved, Quincy Jones-produced groove, the zombie dancers got their groove on, before a large crowd of onlookers around the lawn.

"Thrill the World" began in Toronto back in 2006, with a Guinness World Record-winning gathering of dancers, mimicking the famed "zombie dance" featured in the music video for "Thriller."

The global "Thrill the World" tradition was born, timed with Halloween and synched to specific times. This year, those designated times were 10 a.m. and 10 p.m. Greenwich Mean Time, aka 3 p.m. Pacific Time.

Share Story [facebook](#) [Tweet](#)



A flash mob of zombies perform Michael Jackson's "Thriller" at the Courthouse Sunken Garden on Saturday.

KENNETH SONG/NEWS-PRESS PHOTOS



Zombies rise from the underworld during Saturday's "Thrill the World" event.

As explained on the "Thrill the World" website, the phenomenon "is more than just dancing to a six-minute song. This is a global community project that is inspiring others to break down barriers, connect with people of all religions, race, political and economic persuasions, contributing to helping humanity, encourage environmental stewardship and encourage people to step up as leaders, visionary, and creators."

Locally, the hosting organization for this seventh annual affair is the group World Dance for Humanity, which offers "women an energizing dance class to great music from around the world."

The group organized several rehearsals for the dance, going back a month, at the Santa Barbara Dance Center and at Alameda Park, with a requested fee of \$40. Proceeds, gleaned from donations and sponsorships by businesses and for individual dancers, will go to the group's "Rwanda Education Fund," with a portion slated to subsidize scholarships to the Westside Boys & Girls Club.

Meanwhile, back at the Sunken Garden zombie conference, the dance ensemble worked up its practiced moves, from a reclining slumber-stupor to rickety gestures turning ever more fluid as the groove and the song progressed. By the time Vincent Price intones his creep-fest-y narrative at song's end, the dancers end by turning their festering maws on mock-frightened audience members.

An announcer capped off the performance with a resounding vote of support: "That was spooktacular!" Soon after, a children's version of the same dance, rehearsed and performed by students from four Goleta elementary schools, in a group that included a zombie bride or two (speaking of wedding parties on this site), a couple of Snow Whites, and one girl with a giant butcher knife plunged into her head but dancing like her remaining life depended on it.

Within an hour of the original 3 p.m. dance, the restless choreographed zombie infestation downtown had crept across Anapamu Street and set up shop in the large downstairs area of the Central Library, thrilling library patrons with a large, ghoulish troupe repeating the "Thriller" dance, in pop-up mode.

More flash mobbing continues today with surprise public appearances in the Santa Ynez Valley, leading up to a climactic pilgrimage-style tribute to the man Michael Jackson, at the gates of his old Neverland compound, and a dance party at Cold Spring Tavern.

Michael Jackson would no doubt approve of the goings-on in his home turf.

email: news@newspress.com



**Home**

**Local News**

- Breaking News
- Business
- Celebrations
- Columnists
- Life
- Sports

**Editorials**

**Opinions & Letters**

**Obituaries**

**Travel**

**Special Publications**

- Parade Magazine

**Classifieds**

- Place your Ad
- Real Estate
- Rentals
- Employment
- Announcements
- Merchandise
- Garage Sales

**Real Estate**

- Finance
  - House & Home
  - Open Home Directory
  - Commercial Properties
  - Rentals
- Archives**

**Site Index**

- Weather
- Traffic
- Arrest Logs
- RSS Feeds
- Gas Prices

**Contact Us**

- Contact News
- Pay Your Bill
- Advertising Information
- Elected Representatives
- TV Listings
- FAQ
- Front Page

Follow us on:  Facebook  Twitter

---

All Content Copyright© 2017 Santa Barbara News-Press / Ampersand Publishing, LLC unless otherwise specified.  
[Legal](#) | [About Us](#)