



Being black and human expressed through dance

Posted on November 25, 2014 by Ticket

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One woman's perspective about being black and being human, now and throughout history, will grace the stage as the next event of the Bryn Mawr College Performing Arts Series. Since 1984, the annual series features events aiming to recognize and celebrate the value of the arts. Choreographer and dancer Camille A. Brown will present two works on Dec. 5. When series coordinator Lisa Kraus saw Brown and her dancers in a showcase, she knew she wanted to get them to perform at Bryn Mawr.

"Their energy, virtuosity, and smarts made me want to share their work with our audiences," she said. "Brown tackles thorny subjects with humor and is, in my opinion, a very important artist for our time. I think everyone who attends will be moved in some way, and will definitely be entertained."

Brown addresses the politics of pleasure and contemporary notions of beauty for black women in her newest work "Black Girl." She and her dancers also will perform highlights from her work "Mr. TOL E. RAnCE," which melds comedy, animation, and historical dance styles to explore what black performers have had to tolerate from the past to the present, according to the press release.

"Black Girl" explores the complexities of creating a positive identity as a black female in urban American culture. Brown created the work after discovering her true motive for doing so. "On tour, a lot of black women and girls asked if I was going to do something that focused mainly on our stories. Before I stepped into that idea, I wanted to make sure my reasoning for creating the work came out of conviction rather than obligation," Brown said.

With that work and others, she has performed around the world and received accolades and awards. She has been nominated for New York Dance and Performance Awards, among others. But her focus is to foster dialogue among audiences and local communities about the role of arts in society and as an expression of what's happening in the world. The works feature a fusion of African, Hip-Hop, Jazz, Modern, Tap, and Ballet with an injection of black social dances, according to the press release. Of course technique and structure matter to her, and performance is important to communicating her ideas clearly, but "the storytelling rather than performance is important," she said. "I love the world of storytelling."

In addition to being able to express her thoughts about the world and tell stories, dance enables her to be expressive. "I'm very shy, so dance and performance was always the most comfortable way for me to communicate my feelings," she said.

And she continues to make work that will get people talking, no matter what they'll say. She's comfortable being herself and putting what she thinks out into the world through her dance and choreography. "I created these works because I didn't want to look back 20 years and regret not doing so," she said. "I didn't want to think, 'if I had only been more courageous and unbothered by what people would think.'"

Accessed on December 4, 2014 at 2:31pm from <http://www.tickettoentertainment.com/blog/2014/11/25/being-black-and-human-expressed-through-dance/>