

Review: Philadanco spans four generations

"Big Bang", Adryan Moorefield, Janine Beckles, Philadanco (Credit: Lois Greenfield)

Merilyn Jackson, *For The Inquirer*

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In his play *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, August Wilson uses song as a metaphor for an individual's highest essence, the true self. Those who have forgotten their songs are forever searching for them.

Song as soul or self inspired *A Forgotten Moon-Song*, the lovely and lyrical world-premiere commission that three-time Bessie Award-winner Dianne McIntyre set on Philadanco to open the company's spring run at the Kimmel Center's Perelman Theater on Friday night.

Joan Myers Brown, founder and director of 45-year-old Philadanco, designed a program, "Having Our Say . . .," of female choreographers whose work spans four generations. McIntyre, the matriarch, is well-known for her choreography in the film *Beloved* and the HBO presentation of *Miss Evers' Boys*, for which she received an Emmy nomination.

Five of Philadanco's best - Janine Beckles, Dwayne Cook Jr., Lalah Hazelwood, Roxanne Lyst, Jah'meek D. Williams - danced her softly mournful work to original percussive music by William Catanzaro and Jerome Morris. In flowing spring pastels, they wafted in between and around, lifting and glancing off each other, finally finding, it seemed, what they had been searching for.

In a chilling and starkly tragic contrast, *A Movement for Five* by former Philadanco dancer Dawn-Marie (Watson) Bazemore, blasted open with Public Enemy's "Fight the Power." About the Central Park Five, the youths wrongly arrested, convicted and sentenced for the violent 1989 attack that left jogger Trisha Ellen Meili near death, it captures their soul-crushing plight, resignation, and resentment, and how near collapse they were by the time another man confessed to the crime in 2002. The improbably tall (6-foot-5) Adryan Moorefield moved as fast and forcefully as the rest of this dizzyingly speedy troupe. Allison MacDonald, Courtney Robinson, and Hazelwood were the sorrowful women (mothers, sisters, girlfriends?) who try to console and support them.

In Bebe Miller's *My Science*, a terrific female trio performed isolated, in-sync movements, as men came touring out of the wings, each with a woman on his hip. And Brown brought back 2001's *Hand Singing Song*, by Urban Bush Women founder Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, who studied under McIntyre. With the full company in Black Panther berets, they slicked it out, using all the recognizable hand signifiers of that era.

An excerpt from Donald McKayle's *Rainbow Round My Shoulder* stopped everyone's heart. In a pale peach waltz-length gown, Courtney Robinson danced a solo in tribute to Brown's friend and Philadanco benefactor Mary Hinkson Jackson, once a member of the Martha Graham Company, who died last year. Robinson's reach, with her willowy arms and legs, her torso swaying, was a song.

