

HELLO. I AM A DANCER.

A BLOG FOR DANCERS OF COLOR

01/10/2011

You Should Know: Push Dance Company

Hip-Hop operas, flying dancers and graphic animations are just some of the things incorporated into **Push Dance Company's** productions that has critics describing the troupe as "electrifying and impressive".

Artistic Director of the San Francisco Bay company **Raissa Simpson** took a break from her busy schedule to introduce her company to you and talk about how the company got its start five years ago.

"I really had something to say, I thought to myself, 'I have a voice that is not being heard in the San Francisco Bay area.'"

The company explores mixed race, identity, and the affects of contemporary issues through dance. Raissa who is of Filipino and African-American heritage says before she sets a piece on company members, *"we research our own personal history and historical events to see how it all fits together."*



Raissa remembers she had her share of doubters when she told people she was starting her own dance company, and many questioned her choreographic style.

"There were people who wanted me to make dancers like Alvin Ailey. One person said to me, 'Your movements need to be more African-American as if African-Americans don't do more than one type of dance.'"

"We are flying, we use harnesses, we incorporate film, we use multimedia, we work with animation artists...Push Dance company is a cross cultural dance company. I always wanted to show the African American dance experience, but we're not limited."



In terms of the company's name, she says, *"The reason I named it 'Push' is because I want to push boundaries. We are a mixed media dance company and we focus on athletic dance. We stand out because of our dynamic athleticism."*

To aspiring female choreographers Raissa says to find a mentor. *"It's important as a female dancer to really have a good role model. I've had a lot of African-American female choreographers who have reached out to me and mentored me."*

If you're going to be in the San Francisco Bay area, Push is hosting open auditions for the company toward the end of January. For more information visit www.pushdance.org or keep up with the company via Twitter [@pushdance](https://twitter.com/pushdance)

