



Review
Featured Article

Dance Spirit Magazine, San Francisco Treat, Black Choreographers Festival hits the Bay Area

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 pictured below: Raissa Simpson
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SAN FRANCISCO
TREAT **Black Choreographers**
Festival hits the Bay Area.

In February, the San Francisco Bay Area played host to local dance makers with the third annual Black Choreographers Festival: Here and Now. The three-weeklong event featured such established artists as Jason Samuels Smith and Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, and a diverse range of dance styles (contemporary, African, jazz, ballet and hip hop). Also on the schedule: curtain talks, master classes, an art gallery exhibit and a symposium on race and gender issues in the arts. The third weekend of performances—titled the Next Wave Choreographers Showcase—was devoted to seven up-and-coming choreographers, including one of BCF's Emerging Artist Mentoring Program participants, Raissa Simpson.

Simpson, a Robert Moses' Kin dancer and artistic director of Push Dance Company, received six months of mentoring and feedback from Dimensions Dance Theater director Deborah Vaughan. "What I learned from the program is that emerging artists make pieces," says Simpson, "but choreographers take risks."

What resulted was *Inner Cinema*, a short dance which explores African-Americans' evolution in the film industry. "Film epitomized what everyone wanted to be," Simpson says. "Our community looks to that as culture." She traveled to NYC to study the Harlem Renaissance and filmed street signs named after influential African Americans. The film, coupled with photos, video archives and spoken word, served as a backdrop for her slow, reflective contemporary choreography.

bewhereandnow.com —Wendy Garofoli



Raissa Simpson

MATT HABER