

LA Dance Chronicle

VERSA-STYLE SELLS OUT THE FORD WITH “FREEMIND FREESTYLE”

Posted by [Jeff Slayton](#) | Oct 9, 2021



On Friday, October 1, 2021, Los Angeles based [Versa-Style Dance Company](#) premiered *Freemind Freestyle* to a sold-out cheering crowd at [The Ford](#) amphitheater. This internationally acclaimed dance company featured some of the city’s best Hip Hop artists performing the incredible choreography by Co-founders Leigh “Breeze Lee” Foaad and Jackie “Miss Funk” Lopez-Foaad, and powerful spoken word by written and performed by international touring poet and Hip Hop Artist, educator, and National Poetry Slam finalist [Kane Smego](#).

The first half of *Freemind Freestyle* was a cry for freedom by the oppressed and those labeled by society as “the other,” the minority, the less than. Following a series of Hip Hop-like battles, circles and some amazing dancing, act one morphed into some of Foaad and Lopez’s darkest work that I have seen thus far, even though prior works of theirs have investigated these subjects. The costumes were black, gray, sometimes hooded, with an occasionally slash of red across the performers’ chests like the symbol of shame in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s 1850 historical fiction *The Scarlett Letter*.



Versa-Style Dance Company Performing "Freemind Freestyle" at The Ford – Photo by George Simian

Hands appearing to hold a mirror as dancers looked at them, which brought about popping style movement, pain, anguish and even death. The subject was crystal clear although the movement was abstract, static, and traversing between all-out Hip Hop dancing to somber reflections on the words spoken by Kane Smego, to abrupt and complete stops.



Kane Smego performing in "Freemind Freestyle" – Versa-Style Dance Company – Photo by George Simian

Throughout the evening, a single dancer, Ceanne Agustin, moved in and out of the rest of the cast. She appeared as an observer and then became a catalyst for change. As I watch,

this character became a quiet symbol of hope driving the others to not give up but to continue seeking and fighting for their freedom, even as act one ends with defeat. A phrase voiced in Semgo's poetry stayed with me all evening. "Are you enough yet?" Are you good enough, strong enough, wise enough, he asked as he wove in and out of the group. It was clearly harsh questions directed to the oppressed to spark them into action; planting in them the seed of self-worth.









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Versa-Style Dance Company performing "Freemind Freestyle" at The Ford - Photo by George Simian

Act two continued as act one ended, but soon hope takes over and the music, the dancers and the choreography explodes into a celebration of hard won freedom. Dark costumes were discarded for bright white shirt jackets and Foaad and Lopez's choreography felt freer and more special. Act two also proved once again that these two dance artists are excellent at their craft. During one scene near the end, a type of dance parade led into several solos followed by a sextet, and an octet. Seamlessly these bled into a quartet, a quintet and more duets and solos that gave the audience a chance to see each performer's unique style.

A solo stood out and that was performed center stage in a single spotlight by Foaad. His amazing Hip Hop moves were greatly enhanced with powerful stillnesses and the emotions exuding from within. Each and every dancer in this company is amazing, but standout performances in this incredible section were provided by Jackie "Miss Funk" Lopez-Foaad, Harry "Full Out" Weston, and Gbari "GQ" Gilliam.



Versa-Style Dance Company performing "Freemind Freestyle" at The Ford – Photo by George Simian

The final group finale was driven by drum filled music score that literally had some audience members dancing in their seats and into the aisles. This music awoke a primal core in everyone within earshot. Freemind Freestyle was yet another hit for Versa-Style Dance Company!

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Freemind Freestyle was choreographed by Jackie "Miss Funk" Lopez-Foaad and Leigh "Breeze Lee" Foaad. Freestyle sections were conceived by each individual artist* The Hip Hop/Streetdance Company Artists included: Jackie "Miss Funk" Lopez-Foaad, Leigh "Breeze Lee" Foaad, Alli Gray, Harry "Full Out" Weston, Anthony "Berry Groove" Berry, Cynthia "C-Soul" Hernandez, Ernesto "Precise" Galarza, Brandon "BeastBoi" Juezan, Brianna "Passion" Grey, Gbari "GQ" Gilliam, Jessi "Tru Flow" Pontillas, and Ceanne Augustin. Spoken Word Written & Performed By Kane Smego

Music: Enter The Cypher ("Rej Against The Machine" – Tomahawk Bang); Birth (Royalty Free); Soldiers Assemble ("Bursts of Anger" – Craneuhm); Extinction ("Extinction" – Mixed and Mastered by DJ Quest); Outcry ("Wooming" – Thriftworks); Unborn ("Violet Vape" – Cheel); Rebirth ("Ishikari" – Geode); and Spirit of The Bones ("Moya Wa Taola" – Black Motion).

Lighting Design was by Jackie “Miss Funk” Lopez-Foaad; Dramaturg Bobby Gordon; Consultant Rennie Harris; Costume Designer Alex Ayon; Stage Manager Aubrey Mamaid; Assistant Stage Manager Bianette Linares; Videographer Jaimar Viray

To visit the Versa-Style Dance Company website, click [HERE](#).

To visit The Ford website, click [HERE](#).

Written by Jeff Slayton for LA Dance Chronicle.

Featured image: Versa-Style Dance Company Performing *Freemind Freestyle* at The Ford –

Photo by George Simian

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