



Culver City News

Versa-Style Dance Company takes story of hip-hop from streets to stage

By

Osiris Munir

-

April 7, 2015

Let's just say that hip-hop is alive and well. Not only is it alive, it lives as an authentic culture growing on the insides of the big homegrown test tube called Los Angeles.

If Dr. King were alive today and an alumni of Pepperdine University, he would be very happy to lay witness to his dream in full effect. Watching the evolution of hip-hop and now it's urban presence is like watching the horror movie "28 Days Later." The movement is infectious and if bitten by the hip-hop culture, if the rhythm gets anywhere near your bones, near your ears, or you taste it visually through the YouTube screen, you are infected.

The Versa-Style Dance Company, one of the main strains of "hip-a-noids," is spreading this infectious world of dance through education and visual images all for the love of hip-hop. Conceived by Jackie Lopez, aka Miss Funk, and Leigh

Foad, affectionately referred to as, Breeze-Lee, nine years ago, the Versa-Style Dance Company now serves as a main vein for an ongoing information system about the origins of hip-hop and its various factions. The general tenor of the company is to bring the culture of hip-hop to audiences globally, educating others on the ethics and historical significance of hip-hop. Miss Funk is a charismatic speaker who creates a dynamic interaction with cheering groups of happy soon to be lockers, poppers, and in some cases, professional performers.

The company is comprised of some of the best street dancers in the city. Versa-Style mixes roots of African beats and Merengue of the Dominican Republic, along with traditional and current hip-hop dance steps. Versa-Style's Miss Funk, Breeze-Lee, Harry Weston, Alli Gray, Michael Lor, Lilian Ortega, Anthony Berry, Joey "Showstopper" Velasquez, Jackie Oka and Ernesto Galarza bring the thunder as they perform high-powered and perfectly choreographed dance routines to urbanites, their friends, families and the general public. Miss Funk is especially delightful to watch, because she uses so much power and drive, while wearing a big smile across her face.

I guess you could say that smile comes from deep within, when you happen to be the first in your family to graduate from high school, attend L.A. Valley College and then transfer to a UC and graduate. Oh 'n' please! You should already know, mama stomps some serious moves and with her Versa-Style crew, even Missy, would have to holla. As if being a cofounder of Versa-Style isn't enough, Miss Funk is also the non-profit's next Generation's Co-Artistic director and Choreographer. Her natural talent at lecturing and driving home the hip-hop message is an undeniable part of being the Adjunct Lecturer team at UCLA's World Arts and Cultures department. Lopez also holds the position as Director of UCLA's Summer Arts Intensive for high school students and Executive Director of the Flourish Foundation, a private philanthropic organization set up as a module designed to respond to the lack of arts in schools.

To date, the United Kingdom, New York City, Philadelphia, Israel, France and India have been so fortunate to have Miss Funk, Breeze-Lee and their Versa-Style Dance Company, interact with their students and administrative staff. Sponsors and local supporters are happy to rally around the company increasing the invites and donations more and more each year. The beauty of Versa-Style lies in its ability to tell a story, the story of hip-hop and where it came from, using live conversation from iconic Soul Train hip-hop dancers like Damita Jo-Freeman, Master Locker and Jimmy "Scoo B Doo" Foster, who started the dance style known as the "Scoo B Doo." Foster acknowledged owing his lock appeal to lock creator Don Campbell. Both met at Maverick Flats, another yester-year notable, and the rest is their story. Versa-Style Dance Company continues to have the intense desire to share their scholarly knowledge about hip-hop, its mass appeal and its ability to create cultural bonds like no other genre of music has ever done before.

Hip-Hop breaks down to a dance expression acknowledging a community's pain, joy, suffering and sorrow and a movement that started in the streets. It has made its way to become an influential power player, an enigmatic ode to dance revolution and for some, a necessary way of life. For more information on Miss Funk, Breeze-Lee, and how to donate to Versa-Style Dance Company and Versa-Style Next Generation persons interested can visit:
www.versastyledance.com.

<https://www.culvercitynews.org/versa-style-dance-company-takes-story-of-hip-hop-from-streets-to-stage/>