

How can a group of teens stand out at the 2008 Philly Fringe?

By Dee Schmidt, Freelance Writer

Dated: Aug 29, 2008

A group of teen dancers seek to make dance more accessible to new audiences with their performance at the 2008 Philadelphia Live Arts Festival & Philly Fringe

Steven Weisz, Artistic Director of Music & Motion Dance, will be the first to admit that his company of teen dancers is by no means on par with all the professional talent and dance companies showcasing at the Live Arts Festival and Philly Fringe this year. But he is also modest, as this group of nine female dancers, ranging in age from 15 to 21, perhaps offer something no one else can... they make dance accessible to the average audience goer.

Modern dance, while beautiful to watch, can also be very obscure, filled with hidden meanings, nuances and intricate story lines. It is enough to make your head spin and leave you wondering what it is you just saw. It sometimes seems as though the only ones who get it are fellow dancers in the audience, and there tends to be a lot of them. In Philadelphia, at least, it seems as though dance audiences are comprised of almost eighty percent dancers and their friends from the community at large. So why is modern dance not reaching a wider audience and market?

As Music & Motion prepares to showcase their new dance work, *Continents: A Global Voyage* on September 6th at 2:00 & 7:30pm at Houston Hall on the University of Pennsylvania campus, Weisz reflects, "Arts education has suffered in Philadelphia, although now starting to make a come back with the help of the Mayor's office and the work of the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance. But even in arts education programs, music and studio art are offered, but dance and dance appreciation are not. So developing an understanding of dance is left to parents to impart to their children, and their exposure has perhaps also been limited. It is time to change that, dance is in all of us, it is a part of who we are and what connects us all." It is exactly that concept that led Weisz and his dancers to develop *Continents*. Music & Motion literally takes its audiences on a journey of exotic lands around the world, with an exploration of movement from the sun-drenched African mesa; blends of eastern and western traditions in Turkey; the tabala beats of India; modern twists on the original Japanese Jomon culture; Euro-Mediterranean, ethno-techno blends; and rhythmic fusions of Samoan cultures.

What makes the Music & Motion experience unique is that all of the dancers in the company work together to create the choreography. They meet each week in studio to literally play with movement and create their own personal interpretation of the music. These snippets are then combined and re-worked until a new piece is born. Each dancer has inputted in to the dance work, adding their own personal expression, meaning and interpretation. So while not professionally choreographed, it does provide audiences a chance to simply get swept up in the music and movement. And yes, one can even just have fun watching dance!

Weisz, who also operates a web site and free resource for dancers called PhiladelphiaDANCE.org, is quick to add that "Philadelphia has a huge talent pool of dancers and dance companies. Many are small to mid-size companies that struggle for both funding and exposure, but provide such a wide variety of offerings, dance styles and cultural diversity. Their talents need to be more widely recognized and opportunities like the Philadelphia Live Arts Festival & Philly Fringe offer just that!." He hopes for a significant attendance at their performance, but also very much wants to see new audiences in Philadelphia being exposed to dance and other regional dance companies in ways they have never been before.

Catch Music & Motion Dance, *Continents: A Global Voyage* on September 6th at 2:00 & 7:30pm at the

Hall of Flags in Houston Hall on the University of Pennsylvania Campus at 3417 Spruce Street. Tickets are \$10 and \$5 for students. Information at www.music-and-motion.com

###

Founded in 2000, under the artistic direction of Steven Weisz, Music & Motion is a fresh, innovative, performance-oriented, youth dance company. Rather than relying on a single dance style or technique, Music & Motion has developed its own unique movement for each new dance work created. The variety of eclectic styles incorporated into its programs include ballet, jazz, tap, lyrical, modern, funk, hip hop and acrobatic styles.

Music & Motion Dance has performed throughout the tri-state area and even internationally to a range of audiences in its short yet diverse history. With a deep commitment to group collaboration and exposing new audiences to dance and the performing arts, the company has won both critical acclaim as well as many new fans.

Category	Dance, Performing Arts
Tags	dance, Philadelphia, philly fringe, Fringe Festival, music and motion dance
Email	Click to email author
Phone	610-394-9182
Fax	610-394-9162
Address	536 Burmont Road
City/Town	Drexel Hill
State/Province	Pennsylvania
Zip	19026
Country	United States