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# Hip-Hop with Heart



UDD's "Spiritual Battle."

One of last year's favorite Fringe acts, Universal Dance Destiny, returns with a new show.

August 2007

By Lightsey Darst

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It's that time of year: The Minnesota Fringe Festival is August 2–12. Finding the gold among the dross can be tricky at the Fringe, but one show that shouldn't disappoint is Universal Dance Destiny's "Spiritual Battle." Last year, UDD thrilled full houses with "African Roads, American Streets," which went on to win a Best of the Fringe and be reprised later at the Guthrie. Edna Stevens Talton, UDD's charismatic artistic director, based the hip-hop/African show on her own journey from her childhood home in Liberia to New York, as well as her journey through dance styles.

This time, she's branching out. "It's a true story again, but not just my story," she says. "We all go through challenges." She wants the show to be about spiritual struggle, but also to be open so that everyone can see themselves. "That's my little idea," she says. "I want to be able to touch somebody's life."

Talton envisions the show as mixing African and lyrical dance styles. Hip-hop probably won't be absent, given her dancers' talents. Like classical ballet, Talton's hip-hop dance focuses on technique, achievement, and soul. (Think of headspins as pirouettes and you'll see the connection.)

Talton is a master at gathering and encouraging young dancers, including her own son. She doesn't audition, she recruits. "I can tell who I need or who's going to be good. And I tell them, 'You know you're destined to dance?'" Coming from Talton, the words would galvanize almost anyone, and they certainly work on her company. "All of us have

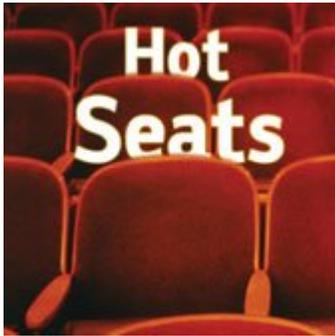
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a passion for dance,” Talton says. “For us, it’s not even work.”

Talton believes she has found her destiny in an art form she sees as universal. “When you can do different types of dance, you can relate to different people,” she says. “It’s a beautiful thing.” **August 2–12.** *The Southern Theater, 1420 Washington Ave. S., Mpls., 651-209-6799*

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