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April 2015

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Dance Mogul

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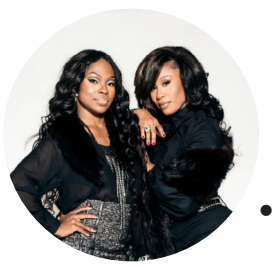

Kiki Ely & Sakinah LeStage .34

-Inspiring Self-Empowerment-

2015

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MAGAZINE

INSPIRING SELF-EMPOWERMENT

SINCE 2010

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Basil Harris
CEO/Founder

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Dance Mogul Magazine

INSPIRING SELF-EMPOWERMENT

"An exploration into the many forms of cultural expressions of dance"

No matter what part of the world we live in, personal expression of the soul is vital. This personal expression is the one thing that all of us desire, and the one thing that makes us fully alive. It is, in fact, the one thing we all have in common. In spite of this, there are constant reminders around us that present us as a world of people who are divided. So much attention is given to all the ways we are believed to be different; as a result, so few of us can see the major ways that we are alike. Unfortunately, the great human divide not only keeps us ignorant of each other, but it actually keeps us "at war" with one another in one way or another.

This thinking must stop if we are to live as civilized humans and make our world better. With this issue, ***Dance Mogul Magazine***, in its traditional leadership role, hopes to bridge the nonsensical divide, and display our human commonalities, starting with one of the most powerful art forms—DANCE!

With this issue, and others to come in 2015, we spread our wings beyond the walls of separation in an effort to unite us, *spirit to spirit*, by way of the international dance market. Our intent and purpose remains the same—*to empower and to inspire*—as we bring awareness to dance cultures all over the world… and present to YOU personal expressions of the soul!

It is important that we all discover and share what we have in common, so that we become a unified humanity, rather than a divided and hostile one. ***Dance Mogul Magazine*** invites you to join us in the joy of not only bridging the gaps, but *erasing the nonsensical divides* wherever they may be found.

Welcome!
to Dance Mogul Magazine™

Inspiring Self-Empowerment



Basil Harris
Basil Harris/CEO & Founder



Anthony Harris
Anthony Harris/Co-Founder

Dance Mogul Magazine was founded by father and son team, Basil Harris and Anthony Harris. In an effort to help support and promote the importance of Arts and education, Dance Mogul Magazine was birthed. Since Dance Mogul Magazine's conception in 2010, we have been sharing stories of dancers all over the world. We're aware that far too many talented and hard-working street dancers, contemporary dancers and professional dancers in general, have not gotten due credit for their work; as a result, we've set out on a mission to help change that by inspiring and promoting Self-Empowerment through the pages of our publication. With the success of our 2014 magazine that focused on building self esteem, a publication that was written to help young female dancers, we decided to start the year off right, and present our current issue, *Defining Women of Grace*, a publication that is devoted to spotlighting the great accomplishments of women in dance. With this *inspiring issue*, we invite you to review our cover story featuring Daphne Lee and her mother, Jay Skeete-Lee. Witness the unique dynamics of their relationship and how it contributes to the success of their family-owned business, the "*Rahway Dance Theatre*," in Rahway, New Jersey. In addition, we allow the voices of women who are leaders in their perspective fields of dance to give their thoughts on defining women of grace and more...

"The Arts is a gift from the Universe to celebrate our individuality." **--Dance Mogul**

Dance Mogul Magazine™

INSPIRING SELF-EMPOWERMENT

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Welcome!
to Dance Mogul Magazine™
Inspiring Self-Empowerment

From the Editor

"Sometimes we can feel so smart, so wise, so intelligent…so humane; that is, until we look around at the result of the intelligence we tout, and compare our human intelligence to the wisdom of nature. The beautiful flowers grow together… red roses, white lilies, "black" dahlias (dahlia Black Beauty)… without the hint of comparison or envy or competition or a fight. They accept themselves and each other just the way they are. Their differences are simply the uniqueness from the mind of the awesome Creator. But humans look at uniqueness as negative "differences" – a word that they've used to mean "you vs. me"; or, a word to force "comparison" or to engender envy and/or competition, with the end result being strife. Is that intelligent—or stupid? Because, despite anybody's perceptions, we are who and what we are, created awesomely by the One divine Creator. Have you driven a long country-type road and seen on both sides of the trail the tall and short trees, flowers of every color living at the base of their trunk, vines entwined in the midst of it all? Did you notice them all leaning in a certain way—literally stretching their bodies in a certain direction? All stretching their very being toward the light and LIFE of the sun above. They all are so unique in their outward appearance, but so unified in their desire for LIFE, through the energy-infused rays of the sun! How beautiful to witness. And, oh, what grand lessons we humans can learn."



PHOTO BY: BOBBY HOLLAND

FLO JENKINS EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

I became very aware of this dynamic in nature while driving my kids to school when they were quite young. The impact of it hit me so strongly, I immediately pointed it out to them—an aah-haa moment for me, their mom, became a teachable moment they've never forgotten. "Look, look at those trees, those tall ones—the little bushes! See them, their bodies twisted, bent around each other, all attempting to maintain their connection to the life-giving energy of the sun! Can you see?! They all want to express their being; they want to live!" To this day, my kids remind me of that lesson they learned on their way to school.

(Unless those trees and plants were having a silent fight that I didn't know about, I consider them an example of how to live together in our uniqueness and our commonalities minus the comparisons and fussing and fighting!)

Dance Mogul, Again, Leading the Way!

Nature has always been a great teacher for all the arts. Through the arts—particularly the multi-faceted art of dance, where the beautiful movements of dancers take us on soul journeys of joy and enlightenment, we bask in the awesome uniqueness of us all, as well as our commonalities. Dancers tell us stories through movement; stories that take us beyond the ordinary or mundane. They break down walls. Onstage, not only are the dancers' bodies unique, but their movements are uniquely their own as well. Yet, the stories coming through their dance make them one. And as we watch, we become one as well.

Dance Mogul Magazine, as a genuine leader in the field of communication, empowerment and inspiration, understands the importance of spreading the word that we are better when we can see ourselves in others. Our team is devoted to changing the world for the better—through the avenue of the international dance market. Now is the time to come together, in celebration, without the fear of comparison or the attitudes of "us vs. them". We're long overdue. We, at **Dance Mogul** encourage you to "Keep soaring with your gifts," because it's quite okay to bask in your uniqueness, while SIMULTANEOUSLY honoring and applauding the special qualities of others.

Visionaries not only see clearly, but also act on a need and fill it. What we, as leading communicators have witnessed, in the arts and elsewhere, is that certain divisiveness bears no good for the world at large. The silly separation because of "differences" has to not only be changed, but uprooted, so that the world's vision also becomes clear—clear to see all the wonderful things that unify us—not just in our small circles, but worldwide. It's time to allow our uniqueness to unify us—not divide us. Basil Harris, **Dance Mogul Magazine** CEO/Publisher and the entire team, again, is taking the leadership role in breaking down walls!

With this issue, you will see, like my kids and I did some years ago, how beautiful it is when we can express and share our very soul through our unique gifts and talents, yet see beyond that to our basic/inherent similarities. Let the dance in the light of the sun begin all over the world as we break down the barriers that prevent us from being the best of who we really, truly were created to be!

Rahway *Dance Theatre*

Founded by: Jay Skeete-Lee

A Tribute...

April 2015

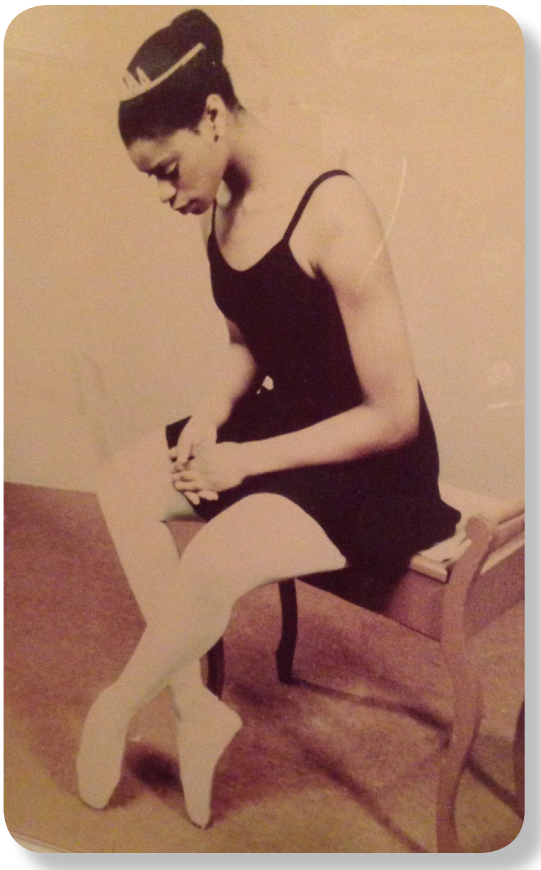
Web: www.rahwaydancetheatre.org

WELCOME TO:



WOMEN *OF* GRACE

Photo by: Mike Mitchell



Business owner | Entrepreneur
Founder of the Rahway Dance Theatre

RAHWAY DANCE THEATRE

"My parents inspired me, as they took the step to leave their homeland in the Caribbean and start a new life in the UK. I saw them work different jobs till they got to where they needed to be in life and support the 3 of us. We always had a parent at hand. They were there to support us in our prospective sports; my brother and I in track, and my sister in swimming. In our house, we always had diverse types of music, and we were exposed to the arts at a young age."

Jay Skeete-Lee

Daphne Lee's Mother...

Rahway Dance Theatre's mission is to introduce and to educate the local communities on the value of dance in everyday life.We teach those from 3 yrs. old to 93 yrs. old. Students at RDT will learn a variety of dance forms, e.g. Ballet, Tap, Jazz, Pointe, Hip-Hop, Modern, Afro-Modern and Pas De Deux. We also have adult classes. Dance is a wonderful way for students to express themselves. It is also being used as an educational tool for developing thinking and motor skills by bringing dance to middle, high, and elementary schools, in the public and private sectors. To give dance a hands-on approach, using classical ballet as the basis, and breaking down the myth of the ballet. The members of RDT are a diverse group of dancers making it relatable to the young audiences, their ages ranging from 13yrs. to 22yrs. Rahway Dance Theatre has taken its Ballets to the local street fairs, parks, parades and theme parks. RDT has also performed at the Apollo Theatre in NY, winning McDonalds GospelFest, and at the Copacabana.

Dance Mogul Magazine Exclusive Interview>>>

DMM: Who were your inspirations growing up?

Jay Skeete: My parents inspired me, as they took the step to leave their homeland in the Caribbean and start a new life in the UK. I saw them work different jobs till they got to where they needed to be in life and support the 3 of us. We always had a parent at hand, they were there to support us in our prospective sports, my brother and I in track and my sister in swimming. In our house, we always had diverse types of music, and we were exposed to the arts at a young age.

DMM: How did dance help build your self esteem as a woman?

Jay Skeete: Dance was introduced in my high school in London, UK. It was made mandatory for all students, upon taking the dance class I was mesmerized at the discipline and the dedication that to took to dance, for it was the same as track and field if not more so. This just raised my self esteem as a black young woman.

DMM: How did dance help bring you and Daphne closer?

Jay Skeete: I was lucky enough to be able to take Daphne with me to work. She found it fascinating to watch me teach, and wanted to join in sometimes. However, as soon as her father came to pick her up, she was off and running to him. Little did I know she was studying how I taught class and would help me in the dance classes. As she got older, it wasn't always easy, having a mom who's a director But we kept the two worlds separate; in the studio it's "Ms. Lee" and at home it's "mom".

DMM: What motivated you to start your own business, and what were some of the hardships and triumphs?

Jay Skeete: The studio Rahway Dance Theatre was started by the parents of Rahway, NJ. They knew I was a retired dancer and had asked me to teach. I told them to find a space and I would teach. Guess what? They found a church basement, so we started with 3 students. We went from 3 students to 25 in 6 months, and the rest is history. One of my first students, a young African-American, was happy and excited to dance and asked me what kind of dance was I going to teach, so I told her ballet. She turned to me and said only white teachers teach ballet. That was when I knew I needed to teach our young girls and help them get to the next level. When these girls would come to me as teenagers, they'd tell me they want to go to college to dance, or they want to be in Alvin Ailey, but they come unprepared. They have been studying hip-hop or jazz, but no classical training, the basics of dance technique. Most of them can never pass a basic audition; it breaks my heart. Getting the community to trust RDT was one of the difficult things to get done. There was always the mentality that "the grass is always greener on the other side". Once students from RDT were seen as winners at the Apollo and at McDonalds' Gospelfest, things started to change to the next level. Students going to prestigious programs such as American Ballet Theatre(ABT), Joffrey Ballet, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Alvin Ailey, and the Rock School, just to name a few, increased enrollment. Now, students have gone on to college BFA dance programs such as Juilliard, Fordham, Rutgers, Montclair, and UArts, just to name a few. Our accomplishments included dancing for the New Jersey Governor's office for the Dr. Martin Luther King memorial and then traveling to Scotland for the Edinburgh Fringe Festival . Most of my students never even owned a passport, let alone leaving the country.

DMM: What would you like your Legacy to be?

Jay Skeete: I think this has been my legacy... to get students, especially girls and women of color, to be prepared for the world of professional dance.

DMM: If the time comes to where you can't teach anymore, what is the best advice you can give to upcoming ballerinas?

Jay Skeete: My parents are my heroes. I thank them for their support. And I thank my husband for his support; also my core parents who started the school, Ms. Bigelow, Ms. Howell, both now deceased, and Ms.Breeden, and Ms. Bailey.

DMM: Is there anyone you would like to thank for helping you on your journey?

Jay Skeete: My high school dance teacher, Ms. Semple, in the UK, who then got me to the Pineapple studios in London with Mr. Charles Augins, and then to the Northern Ballet School in the UK.





PHOTOGRAPHER: CAMARA EDWARDS

Defining Women of Grace

DAPHNE LEE

Daphne Lee (Rahway, NJ) began her dance training at the Rahway Dance Theatre under the direction of Ms. Jay Skeete-Lee. She graduated with Honors from the Ailey/Fordham B.F.A program in dance and is a recipient of the Denise Jefferson Scholarship award. Ms. Lee received scholarships to Jacobs Pillow, Boston Ballet, and Dance Theatre of Harlem and is a regional gold medal recipient in dance for the NAACP ACT-SO competition. Ms. Lee was also featured in the opening video for the Mrs. Carter World Tour for Beyonce and was featured in a short film, "Life of An Actress" by director Paul Chau. Daphne performed works by Robert Battle, Benoit Swan-Pouffer and Andrea Miller among others, and was assistant choreographer to the musical "The Color Purple". She has danced at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland and was a cast member in the sixth season of Dance212's online reality series. She was a former member of Ailey II, Collage Dance Collective, Zest Collective, and back up dancer for UK artist, Sydney Jo Jackson. Daphne is currently a member of Lustig Dance Theatre in New Brunswick, NJ.

Dance Mogul Magazine Exclusive>>>

DMM: Why is it important for women to empower themselves and build their own brands and businesses?

Daphne: Women have a long history of being powerful, but have been faced with lack of equality and double standards. Even resorting to changing our name, to hide our identity. We have been portrayed as weak, distracting, and as Marx mentioned in the past, "women should be seen and not heard". However, women are making changes to be treated as an equal with their male counterparts. Building our brand enables women to have a voice, share, and make an impact in their fields. It's important for women to demonstrate the skills we have to succeed. It helps to recognize our achievements wherever we work, and puts us on a closer platform for gender equality...and breaking the glass ceiling with equal pay.

DMM: Who is responsible for grooming you to be the Queen that you are?

Daphne: Throughout my career, there have been so many mentors and teachers who have invested time into shaping me into the person I am today. However, my mother is definitely on the top of that list. She speaks in a way that makes you understand why something can't or can happen, and she and my father are my number one supporters. My mother would tell me all the negative stereotypes to being black, and a black female at that. Through growing up, I learned to defy these stereotypes but still stay very strong to my roots and to never forget where I came from. She makes me see the ultimate big picture even when I cannot see where my life is going. Despite many women of color who don't always set the best examples for our future, my mother always told me to "carry yourself with purpose and confidence." At the same time, she raised me to be a kid at heart. It takes a king and queen to raise a queen.

DMM: How can things change for the better in regards to equality for women when it comes to all genres of dance?

Daphne: There are many women of color in the dance world that are making an impact daily. From the way they dress, to the way they do their hair for class. With some of the genres toward the classical ballet side, female dancers of color are not seeing themselves in a "tutu" and a "tiara." What I mean by this is, we are not seeing ourselves as princes or princesses, even Kings and Queens, as often as we should. The image we have out there is that black dancers are strong, and powerful. Which is awesome. But so are the athletes of the NFL and NBA. Black female dancers are rarely portrayed as vulnerable, angels, or as fairies. We haven't been given the opportunity. With dance, black dancers can be vulnerable, emotional, artistic, abstract, be in love, play evil characters, and even be comical. Black dancers can reflect human emotions across all genres. For me, it's about being conscious of what we put on the stage and media and how we raise our future. For example, there is a lack of "black love" in society, and in the ballet world, a black male dancer is usually always with a white female dancer. Nothing wrong with that, but at the same time, this influences a young brown ballerina not seeing herself reflected on stage within various roles. Black female dancers must not feel like there isn't a chance. We must not start ballet, to switch to something else, feeling like we are not hirable for what we trained for in the first place.

DMM: What does ballet mean to you and how important is it that you uphold the classy tradition while still being innovative?

Daphne: When I think of ballet, I think about how achieving its movement can never be perfect. There is a constant urge to get better and better with ballet. It's so challenging and at the same time, so beautiful and free. It's important to uphold the tradition, because the movement hasn't changed in 400 years or so. I find that amazing. That means everything from the hair, to the body and feet, and quality of movement has to stay true. The younger generations of dancers must also see tradition of ballet, and at the same time see non-traditional forms. From neo-classical works, to contemporary ballet, these are all included, to the vision that stems from the classical works. Being innovative, in my opinion, has to deal with your own personal experiences, training, and combining that with your artistry to make you unique. Ballet is a craft and a gift. It also speaks volumes that translates to audiences of different backgrounds. I find it most inspiring when the dancer is of color, performing for audiences who may never get to set foot in a theatre. We as artists have the responsibility to be the radical voice for change. That is what makes an artist innovative... it's how well they use their craft for the greater good.

DMM: Is there anyone you would like to thank for helping you on your journey thus far?

Daphne: Among the many greats of the dance world including Josephine Baker, Raven Wilkinson, to Misty Copeland and Paunika Jones. I would like to give thanks to the many people who sacrificed themselves so that I can dance. My ancestors, my people. My family who have supported me from the start. From my father showing me the world, to learning about different cultures, to appreciating life. But also I give thanks to all the setbacks and failures. Without them, I wouldn't know what it's like to fight ahead and push yourself past your limits. Without bad experiences, I wouldn't be able to dance the same. Without bad relationships, without injuries, without rejections….I simply couldn't be an artist. I wouldn't be able to convey messages as genuinely as I could. Adversity has been my best friend.



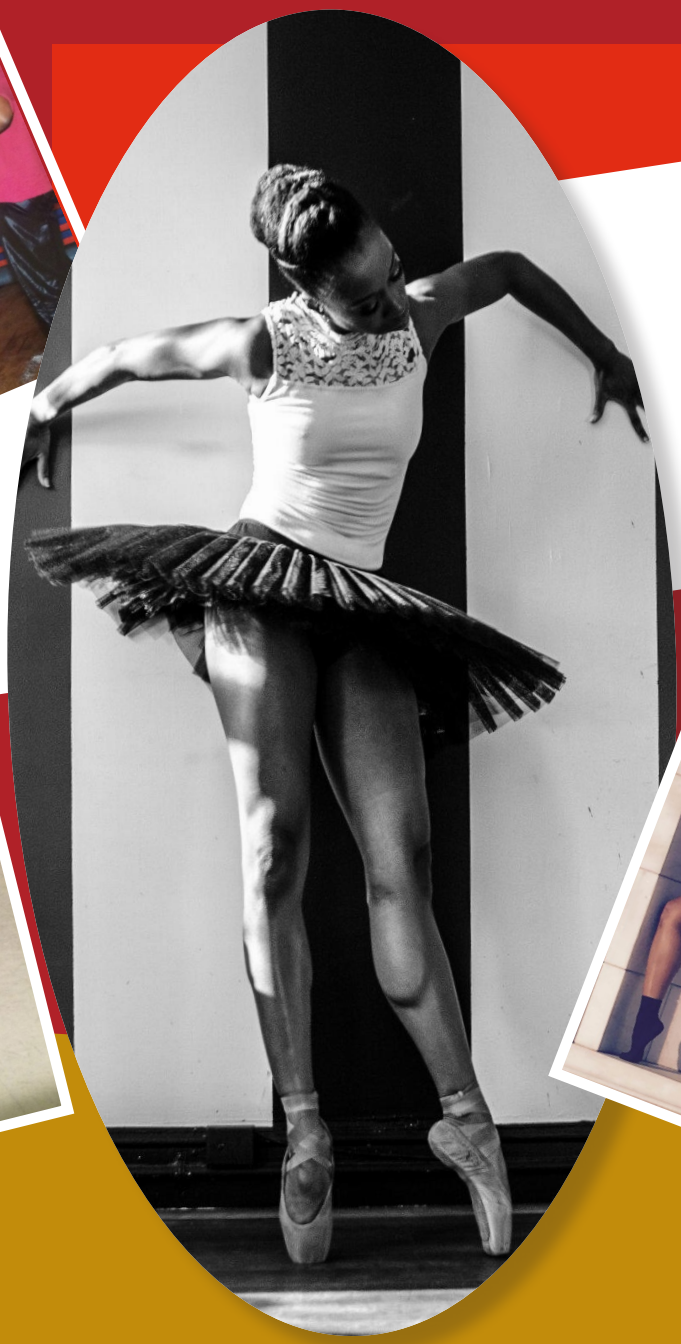
PHOTO BY LUIS PONS





Memorable Moments











TOP LEFT: DAPHNE'S MOM TEACHING WHILE PREGNANT
LOWER LEFT: UK RECORDING ARTIST, SYDNEY JO JACKSON: "GIRL ON FIRE" MUSIC VIDEO
BLACK & WHITE CENTER: PHOTO BY MIKE MITCHELL, COURTESY OF CREATIVE VISIONS STUDIO
CENTER LEFT: DAPHNE AGE 10
RIGHT CENTER: PHOTO BY KYLE MEYER





Cecile Klaus

Women of Grace 2015

Photo by: Alexandre Guys

Versatile Dancer graduated from Alvin Ailey Certificate and currently training with Jennifer Muller/The Works, Cecile Klaus has performed with Modern and Hiphop companies (Mad About Dance, Diwakar Performing Arts, Sonalee Vyas Dance Company, Crazy Fantasy, CKDance, House Dance Conference, Magic Johnson Theater), Skate Dance shows (Tammany Hall, Rollerjam USA) and sometimes her own Street Modern choreographies (China Club, Tammany Hall) Founder, Artistic Director, Choreographer and SkateDance Performer of the Miss'ile team, she develops the Miss'ile Skate Dance Company and becomes a leader in the field. The company performs for sport events (Paris Slalom World Cup, Wina-max), TV (France2, France3, CanalJ, EnormeTV, TMC), movies (Bis, Les Gamins), commercials (Benefit

Dance Mogul Magazine Exclusive>>>

DMM: *Who and what have been your inspirations in dance and in life?*

Cecile: Tons of dancers would answer the same: Michael Jackson! The music videos of the 90's wouldn't let me go to sleep without dancing my sweat off. Later, I started training at a dance conservatory where I discovered how much I loved the pureness of modern dance. My inspiration for Skate Dance is Tayaran Robinson, a Skate Dance legend I met in London when I was 18. He was the revelation for my Skate Dance career. I loved dance. I loved skating. I had to dance on skates.

DMM: *Was your family supportive of your choice to dance?*

Cecile: My dad was always. He was there at most of my performances and helped me finance all of my dance training.

DMM: *How did you develop your craft over the years?*

Cecile: When I returned from London to Paris, I created my own Skate Dance Company: The Miss'iles. With the Miss'iles I trained dancers to perform on skates, created all the choreography and costumes and performed at events. However, I still needed some serious dance training; I applied for the Alvin Ailey Certificate Program and got accepted!

DMM: *What have been some hardships you encountered while pursuing your craft?*

Cecile: The 3 years of the Alvin Ailey dance training program was the most beautiful experience and the best training I could have ever dreamed of; but it was the hardest time, too. It was my first time traveling overseas and living by myself. I had no friends or family around and money was very scarce. The training was so exhausting that finding a job on the side was nearly impossible. Babysitting was all I could do to get money to pay my rent. I lived in a tiny room in East Harlem and I had just enough money left to eat dollar store food. But the New York struggle is a great Life School ;).

DMM: *What have been some of your most memorable moments with dance thus far?*

Cecile: Every dance performance is a memorable moment! The Alvin Ailey Certificate Final Performance was amazing. I had the opportunity to show my creations at the Alvin Ailey Theater and got my Alvin Ailey Certificate. Then, I performed in Noddy the Musical and we go on tour every year in France and other countries. I performed at The Diwali Times Square Festival and also another memorable performance was Bollywood Dreams The Musical. Tickets were sold out; that show was epic! And every time I perform Skate Dance with my team, The Miss'iles, we have a blast. We are sometimes booked abroad. It's fun to travel with your team. I get to perform in great music videos too, like Avicii You Make Me.

DMM: *How are you using your gifts to give back to the community?*

Cecile: I teach dance and skating in NYC public schools. I teach Skate Dance for skaters or dancers in Paris and New York. I also create street modern dance pieces and Skate Dance shows for different kinds of events.

DMM: *What advice do you have for the next generation of dancers?*

Cecile: Being versatile is the key. You can't just stick to one type of training if you want to be a complete dancer. You do have to eat a little bit of everything, but you should still master one specialty.

DMM: *What do you have planned for 2015?*

Cecile: I'm flying to France for the first French edition of the Got to Dance talent show. I got invited to perform with my Skate Dance team. I just finished creating an hour long show about the history of Skate Dance that I am starting to promote. Besides that, I am still working with different modern dance, Hip Hop, and Bollywood companies for upcoming performances in New York.

DMM: *Where do you see yourself 10 years from now within the arts?*

Cecile: I want to be busy dancing for companies worldwide. I compose music and I always wanted to create a whole ballet choreography with all my piano works. I must find the time to accomplish this. As for Skate Dance, I'd like to develop it more, choreograph and perform for more big artists, or have my show booked worldwide!

DMM: *Is there anyone you want to thank for helping you on your journey?*

Cecile: My dad and my brother are my precious closest family: My dad for his support, my brother for his great advice. Tayaran Robinson who inspired me and changed my life. RIP. The Miss'iles, especially Ines & Mandy, the main company members that always stick with me no matter how crazy are the situations that I put us into.





Eva Schou

Women of Grace 2015

Photo by: Brian Mengini

Yin and yang, black and white, soft and hard, hard and weak, moon and sun. There is a balance in all aspects of life. In order to have harmony, the balance must be respected and upheld. This happens by nourishing each side of the scale equally. In my opinion, the balance between the sexes has shifted, and it has been like that for a very long time; so long that it is now a part of who we are as a people, and the way we see the world for so long that the same solutions to the world's problems are suggested and keep coming up short. I do not consider myself a feminist, and regrettably I do not believe that 'women's rights' movements and awareness groups shouting and fighting to be heard will do much difference. Because it's not about women. It's about *all of us*. The world is in need of feminine energy, and it is your job and in your interest to help whether you are a man or a woman. Before this gets too high strung, let's start somewhere else.

Dance Mogul Magazine Exclusive>>>

***DMM:** How important is it for females to empower themselves and build their own brands and companies?*

I live in Denmark, a country that prides itself on being a forerunner when it comes to equality between the sexes. That being in terms of employment, legal rights, affirmative action and child custody. Nevertheless 'the balance' between the sexes is not found here either. I think I was in my early teens before I first discovered that men and women (girls and boys) were indeed different and had different opportunities, and that my path in life would take a little more convincing than that of my male classmates and cousins. For years, I competed with the boys on their terms.

I tried to outrun them in gym class; I didn't give in to tears nor show vulnerabilities. I pretended that I, too, enjoyed football; and without realizing it, I acted and talked like one of them. I saw a lot of my girlfriends do the same. For some it was natural and true to their nature, but for most, this was forced and unfulfilling. I like the idea that there is a feminine and a masculine energy in all of us. Men and women. If the balance shifts, the harmony can not be upheld.

When I started dancing, I went on a journey of self exploration like I think most dancers do. Studying dance is also studying yourself. Shining a light on all your glory and weaknesses at once. Especially when working with dance as a free expression, as we do as freestyle dancers. It's you and the music. In the dance community, I met the same stigmas and the same unbalanced relationship between the masculine and the feminine. For a few years, I dressed like a little Bronx boy in 'Dickies' and hoodies, and I tried to dance like I was from the 'hood. It never came natural to me.

I would watch some of my biggest inspirations in dance, and I would envy the freedom in their expression. I have always been a fighter, and I kept thinking that with practice and enough self persuasion I would be able to fight my way to being a great dancer. This was a masculine approach. It was not until I met women in dance like Marjory Smarth, Kumari Suraj, and the women of MAWU from New York that I realized that what I was trying to suppress and change was dying to come out.

I remembered where I came from. What music I liked growing up. That dancing doesn't make me angry. Then the transformation began. Once I let go of what I *thought* I had to do, and did what came natural, everything changed. I didn't have to struggle to get jobs. I didn't speculate in creating a dance company to gain success but I had so much new found energy and love for what I did, that it felt natural to share it with others. That is how my dance company 'Werkaholics' was born. We didn't have any payed jobs for years but we worked our asses of because we were so excited about and proud of the project. Eventually all the work was rewarded but that was never why we did it. What I had been ashamed of or thought nothing of for so many years turned out to be my strongest side and my biggest success.

Really I just had to be….*myself*. I thought that 'if it comes natural it cannot be worth anything'. And I think this is one of the biggest lies that we as women tell ourselves. When we stop fighting the men's battles and start living our authentic lives and dancing our authentic dance, we start to empower ourselves, our surroundings, younger girls AND the men. They can see the force in us before the frustration.

We can keep telling ourselves as women to 'start building companies', 'create our own businesses' and 'dare to take the jump' til we are blue in the face. If it doesn't come from the heart, it will never truly have value to us or to anyone else. It starts with *us*, ourselves. Only your biggest passion can become your biggest success… I started this article talking about balance, so to honor my theme, I should end on the same note. The idea behind these words is that in order for us to obtain some equality between the sexes, we have to each dare to be true to who we are, honouring both the masculine and the feminine that is inside of us. If you keep fighting a battle on someone else's side of the fence, you will never shed light or promote what you yourself are all about. A woman will never be heard or respected if she does not stand by her beliefs and express them exactly as she feels is right, with no fear of not being accepted. Inspiration is the strongest motivator. So go out there and be YOU in all your glory and inspire others to do the same.





Maeghan McHale

Women of Grace 2015

Photo by: Cheryl Mann

Maeghan McHale, named one of *Dance Magazine's* Top 25 to Watch in 2010, was born in Baltimore, MD. She went on to study at the Baltimore School for the Arts where she performed works by David Parsons, Hinton Battle, David Grenke, and John Clifford. She received a full scholarship to Dance Theatre of Harlem, where she performed with the Dancing Through Barriers Ensemble. While living in New York City, Maeghan studied at Steps on Broadway and performed with Extended Dance Company, as well as off-Broadway under the direction of Tony Award winner, Hinton Battle. She has also participated in the Jazz Dance World Congress, The Miss America Parade, and Dancers Responding to Aids Benefit. In 2005, Maeghan received a full scholarship to the Giordano Dance School, and in 2006 she became a performing apprentice, performing with the company both internationally and nationally.

Dance Mogul Magazine Exclusive>>>

DMM: How important is it for females to empower themselves and build their own brands and companies?

This reminds me of the long talked-about question.... "Why are there not many female Artistic Directors in the dance community?" For me, it is not only important, but necessary for women to make sure each unique voice of ours is heard, appreciated and understood by all. We want to make a difference. Be a role model to all young girls, showing that you can achieve anything and that the possibilities are endless. To leave behind a legacy for generations to talk about and grow upon.

Pioneer a change, a fresh new direction that could be lucrative and open the doors for many. I have always been a firm believer that the more knowledge you have, the more you will grow. Be confident in what you have to offer. What do we have to offer?.....well, I guess you'll just have to wait and see! It is not unrealistic for there to be more women at the head of companies, corporations, brands, etc.

Lately, more of my fellow female dancers have been creating and pushing boundaries. They are in high demand; everyone wants to be a part of it. This is only the beginning. For some time now, we have been the "corpse de ballet" that has constantly kept the wheel turning, and now it's time for us to step into the spotlight.





Donna Pidel

Women of Grace 2015

Web: www.balletroyale.com

The way in which we as women develop our brand and our business goals, is not so much about the product itself, but about who we are as leaders. Indeed, the realization that being a female in today's competitive environment requires reflection and retrospect. Knowing who we are and where we came from is the critical key to recognizing which path we take and to where. This knowledge of one's self is what helps transform a thought into a product, into a life style that is sustainable. Successful women are pioneers...they are gutsy. The success of women in business will forever influence the landscape for entrepreneurial acquisition and development based upon the fearless nature of the bold.

Dance Mogul Magazine Exclusive>>>

DMM: How do you define a graceful dancer?

Donna: **A graceful dancer exudes beauty because she is an original, and the way in which she carries** her-sel**f** and carries the movement is quite poetic. With conviction, she is musical and sensitive, and she performs effortlessly with the greatest of charismatic charm. The dancer is eye catching because of the ease of her interpretation. With the marriage of flawless technical brilliance, she unfolds one layer at a time, to uncover the depth of outer beauty which is captivating, magnetic, artistic, and inwardly connected to the intention within the movement.

When the dancer has no technical limitation, for me, the eye naturally falls upon the artistry and I become captivated with the graceful execution of choreography. For one moment, time stands still and I'm connected, almost coexisting with the dancer as she performs.

Sitting in the audience, one may observe the dancer tilt the head just so. The arms rise and are followed with a lightness of hand, framing the body and adding shading to the movement. With intelligent and expressive musical phrasing, she moves the legs first, the arms slightly delayed, adding texture to the movement. The ebb and flow of the torso and the head move in a seemingly whirlwind of carefully scripted choreography, which she self-directs with her own artistic interpretation.

This exceptional artist engages and mesmerizes the audience with and without intention and captures your attention for the duration of her performance. I tend to believe that this dancer is a prodigy. She is born with a special quality which is like a thumb print. She is original, exceptional, and graceful.





Sarah Katarina

Women of Grace 2015

Photo by: Kojo Acquah

Sarah-Katarina “SKooJ CorE-O” brings her knowledge and talents to thePerforming Arts with experience in performance, choreography, instruction, and adjudication. Her present focus is on Commercial/Theatrical Hip Hop and Contemporary dance, yet strongly trained invarious styles such as Musical Theater, Jazz, and Modern. SKooJ is agraduate of Dean College with a Degree in Dance and BusinessAdministration. After her two years at Dean, SKooJ traveled to LosAngeles, Tampa, and San Antonio to choreograph and now is back to her Boston roots to become part of the Boston dance scene!

Dance Mogul Magazine Exclusive>>>

DMM: How do you define a graceful dancer?

Sarah: **Defining what a graceful dancer possesses is complex, however, for me it can be explained in** two words: *pure beauty*. When you watch a mover, they might have the highest battlements, more creative choreography, or even the greatest personality, but grace is a power that comes from within and can only be reached with true soul searching and trust in yourself.

As a performer, the time that I first felt absolute grace was when I performed a self choreographed solo in 2006 entitled, "Via Dolorosa" in honor of my father, who passed away from melanoma skin cancer the year before. This song took me to a place where I could feel his presence, which guided me to channel my message of trust, faith, and unconditional love, even through the trials and tribulations I faced within the recent months. This intangible devotion cannot be mastered through countless hours of rehearsal or even continuous repetition, but it is more a spiritual intervention sparked from inside. Once I surrendered to the movement, stopped being afraid of telling my personal story, and removed any uncertainties from my thoughts, was finally when an undeniable grace seeped through my veins and I created a magic that I could have never done on my own.

As the soulful iconic singer Whitney Houston once said, "I didn't know my own strength". Grace intervenes through our inflictions and enlightens us about the elegance, power, and natural beauty we have. We just need to be pushed out of our comfort zones to expose these attributes. Many times dancers are afraid to "let go", "let the music lead you" or even "throw your heart on the dance floor." But I say, take a chance on being that storyteller, 'cause that is when the grace reaches its fullest potential and glows for everyone to feel.





Dollie Henry

Women of Grace 2015

Web: www.bop.org.uk

Dollie Henry has led a respected career of over 28 years as a performer, choreographer, director and educator, and is recognized as one of the most formidable exponents of Artistic Jazz Dance. Her innovative and distinctive style captures the energy and flair so needed for the dance industry of today. Her creative works have been commissioned and performed at theatres and venues both nationwide and worldwide. She continues to teach internationally as a guest choreographer, delivering jazz dance and musical theatre residencies, masterclasses & workshops. Dollie epitomizes all it is to be a consummate, all-encompassing creative Jazz artist. A fusion of expertise and genuine expression of creative spirit allows this Lady to sustain her position as the catalyst for artistic Jazz Dance and theatre creativity the UK has yet to recognise.

Dance Mogul Magazine Exclusive>>>

***DMM:** How do you define a graceful dancer?*

How would I define a GRACEFUL Dancer?… First of all, what is the definition of the word, "Graceful"? If we apply Graceful to dance, we are probably thinking about BEAUTY of MOVEMENT. Elegance, stylish, refined, dignified and distinguished … Showing GRACE of Movement.

As a dance artist and Jazz Choreographer, being a Graceful dancer is an interesting concept because it differs across the dance genres. The gracefulness of a Jazz dancer is different from that of the gracefulness expressed by a Ballet dancer.

If I view the "Graceful Jazz Dancer," I look for the fluidity of body movement, lines made by the body, dynamics and dexterity of the physical form, and the unique individual expression of the dancer that fuses perfectly with the accompanying jazz music. The fusion of the jazz dancer's body and the connection to music emulates an understanding of connection both between one's physical self through movement, and through, and, to the music.

To emulate GRACEFULNESS through the art form of dance is a quality that is inherent in the individual dancer and can be presented in many differing ways and through many differing dance art forms. More importantly, it is the presence and personal expression of a dancer's performance that we, as the viewer, are able to connect with. We connect with the power and depth of their artistic expression, and the gracefulness of movement.
When a dancer enters the stage, to the moment they leave the stage, the aim is to bring the artistic expression of the dance and movement that can evoke an emotion, inform the mind, seduce the senses, and be a visual manifestation of the narrative, which in turn directs the Gracefulness, Power, Dynamics, Energy, Flow, Expression and Individuality of the dancer.

In all honesty, it takes so much more to be a Graceful dancer. A dance artist is required to have the technique, dance style accomplished, physical attributes and qualities through which they are able to add their unique personal interpretation and inner creative spirit of expression. This quality in a dancer is usually inherent from an early age, and needs to be nourished and supported to reach a high quality dance expression that transcends into Gracefulness on the stage.

A dancer's truth and the physical awareness provides them an opportunity to grow and develop as an artist, and eventually become the architect of their own expressive quality. This should transport beyond the stage, to fully connect with the audience. The beauty of a dancer and the expression they produce is a gift that not all dancers, possess, but as an audience member, we always know a Graceful Dancer when we see one.





Aqura Lacey

Women of Grace 2015

Photo by: Eduardo Patino

Aqura Lacey (Chicago, IL) was raised in Louisville, KY and began her dance training at the Kentucky Centers Arts Reach program at Louisville Central Community Center under the direction of Geraldine Woods and mentor, Aundra Lafayette. She also trained at the Louisville Ballet School as a scholarship recipient and was a student in the Ailey Fordham B.F.A program. Ms. Lacey has attended summer intensives at The Ailey School, Craft of Choreography Conference, and Earl Mosley's Institute of the Arts. Additionally, she has performed works by Camille A. Brown, Ronald K. Brown, John Keen Miller, and Darrell Grand Moultrie.

Dance Mogul Magazine Exclusive>>>

DMM:* *How important it is for females to empower themselves and build their own brands and companies?

Being a woman in this day and age comes along with expectations that can be intimidating at times and overwhelming. We are often put against each other as if it is always a competition in the media, amongst ourselves, the workplace, and especially when it comes to the opposite sex. We have the ability to bring life into this world, to raise and nurture families, and we wear so many hats at the same time, all while looking presentable with an elegant touch.

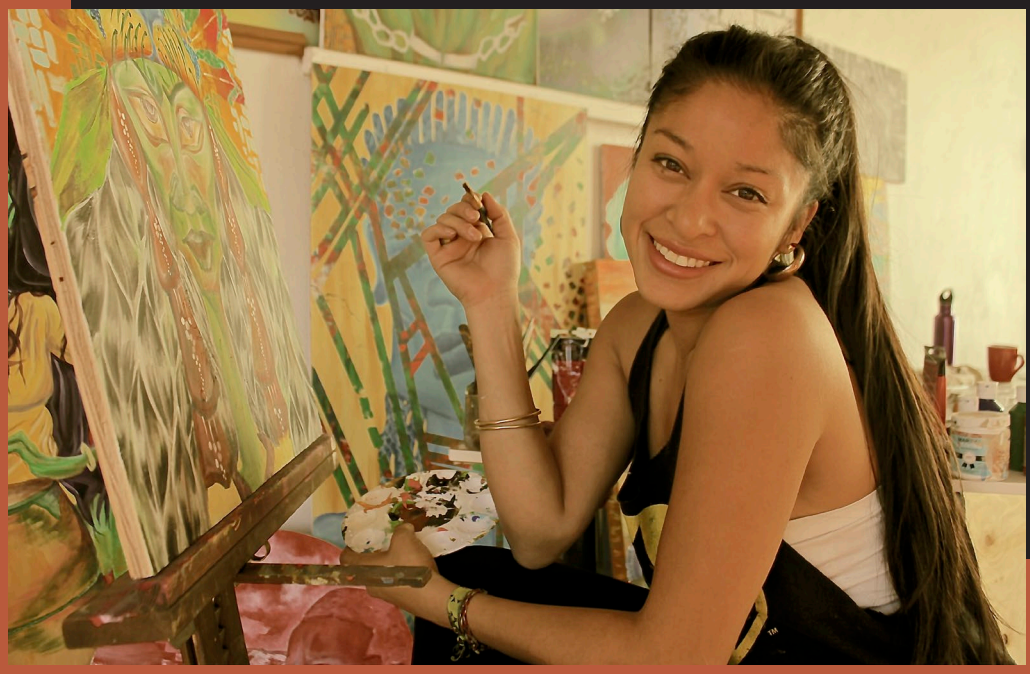
Black women especially are held to a higher standard from a young age to be the best at all costs, or we are expected to spiral down a dark path. Although in the media we are seeing more and more brown and black women finally being featured and in successful positions, they are still fighting stereotypes and belittling labels. We all know that this is a cowardly attempt to stain our image, distract from our powerful abilities, and limit the possible effects we would have on the rest of our young Queens. Nonetheless, the constant battle for perfection can bring forth a considerable amount of pressure to young women, and can be discouraging and intimidating. I believe that not knowing our history, or watching our history being adapted and accommodated to fit the white experience, unfortunately results in lost young girls forced to conform to unrealistic identities and susceptible to be force-fed negative images of themselves. Then, out of lack of knowledge of self, we use each other as stepping stools or pin cushions to fulfill our own personal egos, competing in any way to feel validated. Somewhere we turned our frustrations with the injustices and inequalities we face in life against each other, which only diverts our attention from the real work we need to do as a unit, as women. That starts individually, from within.

As women, we are beings of life, love, power, femininity, beauty, emotional awareness, intuition and expression. We are so complex and filled with so many natural abilities that it is impossible to define, so no wonder why, at a young age, we are faced with a period of confusion and self discovery. Without a means of expression, you are forced to carry your confusion and emotions on your heart, mind, body and self esteem. If you do not allow time to indulge in yourself, investigate yourself, and find your voice and recognize your worth, you may be left in a position to give so much of yourself that there is nothing left to hold onto. In my opinion, Art in all forms gives you that space, freedom, platform, and license to highlight yourself and discover depths of your identity. It allows you a safe haven to explore other aspects of personality and mind. Then, to see another black woman, a sister, in such a place of enlightenment and self assurance as she goes through life, is so encouraging. Even moreso, when sisters unite and support each other, it ignites a movement. Contrary to popular belief, Queens can coexist. There is, in fact, power in numbers; but on the road, it requires a path of self discovery that I feel begins from the inside out. It is only then that we can recognize our true power and potential so that we can position ourselves to contribute to the rest of our women.

I was raised by a handful of strong, defined, beautiful Black women who each had a hand in molding me into the woman I am becoming and exploring every day. My Grandmother, or Gram-cracker, was a very strong, experienced, supportive woman from the Southside of Chicago who could have a conversation with anyone and had a sense of humor similar to Red Foxx and Wanda Sykes combined. She taught me survival skills, how to treat and deal with people and, of course, the realities of life.

She had a very real and honest approach to life and wasn't afraid to use her words to let you know. My mother, Jackie, although I lost her at the young age of nine, was a beautiful woman who was very independent and creative. She could make something out of nothing and charge you for it. My Auntie, Sheryl Lacey, later took me in and raised me in Louisville, KY. She is the epitome of independence, has always been a stickler for education and following through with your word. She taught me the importance of saving and handling money, the value in hard work and work ethics and, of course, she introduced me to dance at the local community center at the age of 11. Ms. Aundra Layfayette, my first dance teacher at the Louisville Central Community Center, through ArtsReach is such an amazing spirit. She truly was my first inspiration in dance. Her energy has always been so positive, encouraging, uplifting, supportive and carefree. She is timeless and has a light that shines from within. She has always been very health-conscious but enjoys cooking and eating. She even has her own Soup business. My gorgeous older cousin, Adrienne, was the first in my family to go to college. She was the first I saw leave Chicago to pursue her dreams. She is the definition of what it means to be a woman, a lady, a role model, a sister and a friend.

She approaches life with such elegance and class. She is well-spoken, intelligent, honest, and always approachable. She never judges and somehow can always relate and give advice or a unique perspective. All of these women either led by example or directly had a hand in shaping me from a young age. I respect them so much, and they support every move I make. I can only hope that I will be able to share and care for younger girls in any way. Though we are faced with a lot, we are also naturally so strong individually, and especially when we use each other for support and encouragement. There is always more you can do, more learning, exploring, and room for improvement. In the Arts, there is no finish line. So, the journey is in all of the encounters along the way to self discovery and deeper understanding of self and life. I guarantee that there is always another sister that is going through the same thing. Empowering another woman is also rewarding and contagious. Especially with the rate that our Black men are being killed and imprisoned, we have no choice but to support each other. We have to shine the light on our inner selves and constantly investigate the Woman and Artist we have the potential to be.



Jacqui Martinez

-Visual Artist-

Jacqui Martinez is a Lenca Honduran visual artist, painter, set designer, and educator from Los Angeles, California. Her work is inspired by ancestral roots, hip hop, social/cultural ideologies and indescribable experiences that have challenged her purpose where art always comes out on top. Jacqui has worked with Perry-Mansfield performing arts camp where she designed two plays (Pre-Professional Intensive and Young Artist Intensive) celebrating their 100 years of existence.

She has worked as a painter and designer for shows such as Scalpel, directed by Darcy Drollinger, Metal+ Machine+ Manifesto=Futurism, directed by Raelle Myrick Hodges, Iph, directed by Dylan Russell, featuring L. Peter Callender, Oldest Profession, directed by Evren Odcikin (nominated for the Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle for Best Ensemble and Best Specialty.) Jacqui has also painted murals and facilitated art/theater workshops in Los Angeles, CA, San Francisco, CA, Santa Cruz, CA, Mexico City and Arusha, Tanzania.

Her works have been featured in *Insight FOKUS Magazine*, Mujeres De Maiz Zine and Cartonera Zine. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of California Santa Cruz in Theater Arts with an emphasis in scenic design and production. She recently got accepted to NYU Steindhardt's Master's program for Art Education. She hopes her work can spark dialogue and motivate social practice in institutions, streets, and social platforms to inspire change in policy and justice.

Dance Mogul Magazine Exclusive Interview >>

DMM: What have been your inspirations to create art?

Jacqui: I'm inspired by moments that genuinely move me. That have me stuck in one way or another. Where the only way to execute the inspiration is by painting. My work is inspired by graffiti's movement, youth, music, laughter, cries, glorious moments and love. I'm inspired by the will of people trying to make a true change in this world. People that spark important conversation. Youth that break barriers and become leaders. I try to find the value in everything. Everything, essentially, serves as inspiration once you've found the beauty in it.

DMM: How did you develop your craft over the years?

Jacqui: I've developed my craft by committing to my work. I've been engulfed in sketching and drawing since I was a child. My craft has evolved throughout the years technically, but it still explores faces and topics of culture, politics, and spirituality. Your craft needs daily attention and improvement to develop a deeper relationship with it. Once you get it, you can move mountains.



PHOTO BY: JOE CONZO

DMM: What have been some of your most memorable moments pursing your purpose?

Jacqui: I think traveling has been a huge component in my journey as an artist and my purpose. The idea of experiencing an atmosphere very different from your known surroundings is golden. It inspires you to keep learning, and it provides clarity if you are seeking for your higher self. I've been able to go to different places because of my art. Education is an essential tool for my purpose, too. It's allowed me to understand both perspectives of the student and the teacher. I'm not only talking about the education in the classroom but outside of that confine. One moment in particular was while I was doing a Mural project with a middle school in Los Angeles. I had a class of 21 students, and we all had to work together in creating and completing a mural that was 30 ft long. The dialogue around love, respect, integrity and grit was outstanding. To be honest, youth help me find my purpose the most. Youth need creative attention in today's day and age and incorporating art in any programming allows for my purpose to work.

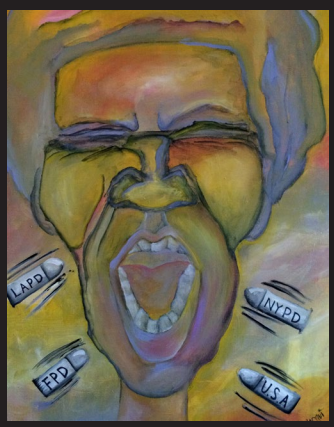


PHOTO BY: TEDDY ADOLPHE (TAP)



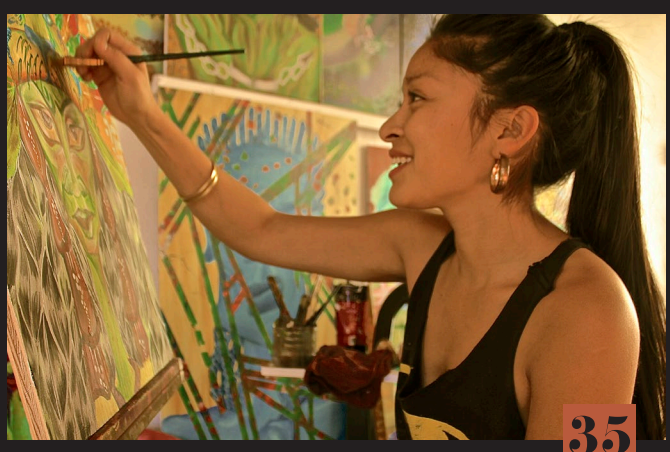
PHOTO BY: JOE CONZO

DMM: What are you plans for 2015?

Jacqui: There is so much to do in 2015! I'm always excited to start a new year. I will still be attending graduate school and while being a student I will also work with different schools to organize murals with youth in the Bronx and Lower East Side. I'm excited to see what will manifest through these education programs. I will also work closely with the Art Culture collective in doing visual work and painting live in a few places. One aim this year to work on a new collection for a potential Solo Show. So much to focus on. Stay tuned @jacquiwar.

DMM: Is there anyone you would like to thank for helping you on your journey?

Jacqui: There are so many good souls that I have to thank for helping me reach goals and open doors to experiences I would never have seen otherwise. First is family and my Lenca ancestors always looking out for me. Don Williams, who was my college mentor and light. Raelle Myrick-Hodges, one of the best theater directors I know and who has given me endless opportunities. Jocelyn Thompson for her exemplary work ethic. Mama C and Baba Pete for holding it down in Afrika. Yadira de la Riva for being an inspiration. Rainbow Theater for giving me my first wings. Zulu King Slone for his support and mentorship. WOTZ CREW and ART CULTURE Collective. My friends turned family. People who have simply said "Great Work." Finally, all the youth that I've worked with who continue to inspire me and teach me how to be a better human being. You are the future and you are now.







Kiki & Sakinah

Women of Grace 2015

Dance Mogul: Who and what have been some of your inspirations in dance and in life?

Sakinah LeStage: My inspirations have been Debbie Allen (Director, Choreographer, Actress) and Catherine Brewton (Vice President of BMI Publishing, Billboard Music's Woman of the Year 2013, my mentor).

Kiki Ely: Some of my inspirations in dance have been the incomparable Debbie Allen; growing up watching her on *Fame* with her beauty and grace as a dancer, choreographer, and actress. I was hugely inspired by the Fly Girls on *In Living Color*. Watching them on TV every week performing so many different styles of dance was amazing to me. I would learn all the routines off my VCR and teach all my friends the choreography. Shawnette Heard was a huge inspiration in my dance career. As Janet Jackson's Choreographer and Creative Director, she brought such magic and visual creativity to everything Janet presented to the world. She's placed some amazing footsteps in the industry and her work is phenomenal. One of my biggest inspirations as a Choreographer and close friend is Jamaica Craft. She epitomizes the definition of creative genius. I'm thankful for her as an African American woman, Choreographer & Creative Director, because she has laid the foundation for so many dancers in the industry, especially from Atlanta. Working with her I learned a lot as a Dancer, Choreographer and Creative Director behind the scenes. I've been able to gain so much insight that has helped lay my own path as a Choreographer and Creative Director.

Dance Mogul Magazine Exclusive>>>

Dance Mogul: How did you develop your craft over the years?

Sakinah LeStage: I studied several forms of dance as a kid: Ballet, Jazz, Modern, Tap, Lyrical, Musical Theatre, African, etc. I attended a performing arts high school where we studied theatre and videos. I trained physically and mentally while pursuing my career as a dancer. I now read business books on owning a business as well as surround myself with successful entertainment executives in order to keep myself sharp.

Kiki Ely: I started training at the age of 6 at Spelman College Children's Dance Theatre, taking Ballet, Tap, Jazz, Modern, African & Gymnastics. I later began extensive training in Ballet, Pointe & Pas de Deux at Ballethnic Dance Academy under the direction of Waverly Lucas & Nena Gilreath. While in college I danced with the Dancing Dolls at Southern University for 4 years. After graduating from college, I decided to continue my dance career full time and moved to Los Angeles where I began heavy training in Hip Hop. I continued perfecting my craft over the next 10 years while living in Los Angeles.

Dance Mogul: How did dance contribute to your self-esteem?

Sakinah LeStage: I was the only Black girl in the company I was in as a young dancer, and I forced myself to be the best and win all the awards and accolades. I would also surround myself with people more successful than myself in order to grow. Those things humbled me, but also gave me the confidence to know when I was winning. I know that nothing was handed to me and whatever I did, I worked hard for. That level of preparation only brings on strong confidence after a while.

Kiki Ely: Dance contributed highly to my self-esteem. As a young child growing up, I was very shy. I barely spoke to anyone, but when I danced I would shine like a light! Dance was always my outlet and it gave me so much confidence as a young woman. Aside from dance feeling incredibly amazing, it gave a sense of accomplishment knowing I can connect with people and make them feel good just by moving my body and not saying a word. That makes me feel good inside.

Dance Mogul: How did your big break manifest and how did you take advantage of it?

Sakinah LeStage: I was given an opportunity right out of college to be the head Choreographer for an artist on JIVE records. I had no major dance career credits. However, I was hired to create an entire Japanese tour for an artist on a major label. I quickly learned the ropes, relied heavy on prayer and faith and made it happen. After that, I knew I needed to simultaneously pursue a career in dance as well as a career as a working Choreographer. So I did that. I quickly and strategically worked with several big name artists in order to grow my resume while also choreographing and creative directing for artists on JIVE and Def Jam.

Kiki Ely: My big break came when I was given the opportunity to not only be in a movie, but also co-choreograph it as well. *Drumline* was my first film and my foot in the door to move to Los Angeles from Atlanta, as well as get signed to Bloc Talent Agency. That was my big break that began the catapult of my career.

Dance Mogul: What have been some memorable moments dance has contributed to your life?

Sakinah LeStage: Some of the memorable experiences are that I have traveled all over the world: to Africa, London, Japan and many other places, all for dance. As a Choreographer, I have choreographed a show that was performed for President Obama and the First Family at the White House.

Kiki Ely: I have had so many memorable moments that dance has contributed to my life. One moment in particular is touring with Christina Aguilera on her Back to Basics World Tour. I remember a very special performance with her on the Oprah Winfrey show. We performed at Radio City Music Hall for a Mother's Day special, and I flew my mom to New York to watch the show. She met Oprah and was extremely proud and happy to be there. I was so thankful to really understand how dance has been such a blessing to my life and allowed me to make so many unforgettable dreams come true for not just myself, but my family as well.

Dance Mogul: How are you giving back to the dance community?

Sakinah LeStage: Through AtLA Takeova, we are giving back to young aspiring talents the tools and insight as well as dance training on how to get in and stay in the industry. I am on a board for a charity in NC called Hope for Harvest. We feed the homeless, I teach a free class to a group of dancers called "Inspire the Fire" for less fortunate kids with big hearts and a desire to perform.



Kiki Ely: With AtLA Takeova we continue to give back and provide professional exposure and experience to young up and coming industry dancers pursuing their dance career.
I also teach and do workshops and Masterclasses at several different studios all across the country. I recently finished working with the dance department at Bates College where they flew me in as a guest Choreographer as well as having an open forum discussing my background, my journey and the fusion of education and the arts. I am also a part of the Alumni at Ballethnic Dance Company where we have started "Beyond the Barre," giving a panel discussion with current dancers that are currently following our footsteps and in the same place we were many years ago. Our guidance and insight helps young teens and adults continue the journey of being a dancer and making good decisions in life.

Dance Mogul: What advice do you have for the next generation of dancers?

Sakinah LeStage: I would say be smart about what type of projects you take as well as money and budgeting for when things are not going well. Stay away from putting all of your life on social media and remember you never know where your next big moment is coming from so be nice, pleasant and fun to work with.

Kiki Ely: Continue to train and perfect your craft as a dancer. Never stop learning and be open to getting out of your comfort zone. Do your research and learn about who paved the way for you to be here as a dancer. Learn all you can as a dancer behind the scenes. We cannot dance forever so have other avenues of the business in mind that you are passionate about pursuing. Learn ways to make money while you are sleeping.

Dance Mogul: What do you have planned for 2015?

Sakinah LeStage & Kiki Ely: AtLA will be going national this year adding cities such as Miami, Houston, Chicago and LA. We plan to continue to also work as a Choreographer and Creative Director with some amazing artists. We will be involved in a major project that we cannot disclose as of yet, but it will be huge for us as Choreographers and for our company. Stay tuned.

Dance Mogul: Where do you see your brand 10 years from now?

Sakinah LeStage & Kiki Ely: In 10 years we will see AtLA with several small subsidiaries under the brand AtLA Takeova. We will host one of the largest dance conventions in the world. We will be internationally known as well as create dynamic, new ways of making dance and dancers household names today. We see our brand of AtLA national and international visiting at least 20-30 cities throughout the year.

Dance Mogul: Is there anyone you would like to thank for helping you thus far?

Sakinah LeStage: I would first like to thank my business partner as well as my manager Jennifer Horton and mentor Catherine Brewton. These strong ladies keep me grounded, focused and ready for all that comes our way. ~

Kiki Ely: I would like to thank my business partner Sakinah Lestage who is my right hand in everything we do at AtLA. I'm incredibly thankful to have someone that is just as passionate and eager about the success of our company and taking it to levels no one has ever seen in the Dance Industry. I want to thank my family: my mom & my sister who have been my rock and support system always. And my beautiful 19 month old daughter, Kennedy-Dream, who inspires me to be a better mom and human being every day. I never knew what love was until I had her. And lastly I want to thank my dad who is in Heaven now shining down on & watching over me through each day of my life. I want to always make him proud so he pushes me to always want to achieve greatness in everything I do.





Learn from yesterday, dream as if you'll live forever,
live as you only have today and hope for tomorrow.





Kim Gingras

Women of Grace 2015

Photo by: Taylor James

Kim Gingras, French-Canadian dancer from Montreal, started training at the age of 15. It was only halfway through University, while studying physical therapy, that she decided to take her passion for dance to a whole new level. She focused on the artform full-time and has made a remarkable career out of it. After being a contestant on *So You Think You Can Dance Canada*, appearing in movies, winning a SOBA award and working on the MJ Experience Xbox game back in Canada, Kim decided to pursue even bigger dreams and made the move to Los Angeles in 2011. Since then, she has had the privilege of working with artists such as Jennifer Lopez, Nicole Scherzinger, Christina Aguilera, Pharrell Williams, Gwen Stephani, One Republic, Pitbull, Hillary Duff, The Wanted, Nicki Minaj and Robin Thicke. In 2013, she lived one of her biggest dreams and started touring the world with the one and only Beyoncé on the Mrs. Carter Show, then continued touring with both Beyoncé and Jay-Z on the On The Run tour this past summer. With her strong belief in the TTDC motto: "If it's meant to be, it is up to me", Kim continues to work hard and strives for growth every day.

Dance Mogul Magazine Exclusive>>>



KIM GINGRAS DANCING FOR BEYONCE | PHOTOGRAPHER ROBIN HARPER

Dance Mogul: Who were some of your inspirations in life and dance growing up?

Kim Gingras: My mother has always been such a strong female inspiration for my sisters and me. She has always supported me to do what my heart was calling me to do. I am very lucky to have such a supportive family. Kelly Konno, an amazing Canadian dancer/choreographer, has inspired me a lot as well. She was one of the first ones to make me realize that moving to the States and making dance a career was possible. She has danced with such powerful talented artists herself and it motivated me to keep going.

Dance Mogul: What is the dance community like in Canada?

Kim Gingras: We have a great dance community in Canada. It definitely isn't as big as the one in the States, but it is strong.

Dance Mogul: Was it a hard decision to move to LA? Did you encounter any hardships?

Kim Gingras: It was definitely a big move. A move that needed a lot of reflection, a move that you don't do over night. But once I had made my mind up about really giving it my best try, I was excited! It took months to prepare my work visa documents and application. I also wanted to make sure I had a bit of money saved up to live out there in case things took a while to pick up. Saying goodbye to family and friends was very hard, but I'm so grateful for their support and for the technology (Skype, FaceTime, etc.). It makes it easier to keep in touch on a daily basis.

Dance Mogul: How do you stay humble with all the success you have achieved so far?

Kim Gingras: I was always encouraged to stay humble, to respect everyone around me, to keep working harder and doing better for myself. It's important to be confident in who you are and what you bring to the table, but there is no need to have an ego. I'm all about staying positive and encouraging one another in this harsh industry.

Dance Mogul: What have been some of your favorite moments on stage?

Kim Gingras: Hmm… that is hard to answer. I absolutely am in love with what I do. Being on stage and entertaining brings me so much joy. I could definitely say that hitting the stage with the one and only Beyoncé has been so remarkable every time! It's so crazy to see the sea of people screaming, cheering and crying of joy, ready to embark on an adventure with you for the next two hours! What makes it even crazier is when you hear people screaming your name!

Dance Mogul: Is there any advice you have for the next generation of dancers?

Kim Gingras: We all know that talent and looks play a big part in this industry. It can be very hard to be judged on your appearance, on what you chose to wear, on the decisions you made when it came time to freestyle, etc. So you need thick skin. You can't let it get to you and take it too personal. That will eat you alive. You have to expect doors to close and you have to believe other doors will open. My best advice is to stay positive, to always carry yourself with the best possible energy. That goes a long way. Visualization is something I believe in as well. Envision yourself doing what you would like to do, let yourself dream big! Let those vibrations out into the universe. And of course always work hard and work on getting better. There is no better project to work on than working on you.

Dance Mogul: Dance has become a worldwide phenomenon. Where do you see it going in 10 years craft wise and business wise?

Kim Gingras: I hope that it keeps blowing up. I really hope that people keep being entertained, inspired and can truly appreciate what we do. I would love for people to really be able to see how much it takes to do what we do (i.e., hours of work, sacrifices, demands, injuries, conditions, and so on). We make what we do look so fun (and it is), but so much goes on behind it all and we are often not truly appreciated to our value.

Dance Mogul: What's next for you in 2015?

Kim Gingras: It is hard to tell ... ha ha. It always is. I like to take it one project at a time. I trust that things will be lining up. I would really like to tour again and I would love to be a part of a movie. Throwing it out in the universe!

Dance Mogul: Is there anyone you would like to thank for helping you on your journey thus far?

Kim Gingras: Oh so many people! Everyone really! Whether it was from support, love, guidance, teaching or even tough love, rejection, disbelief, etc. It all is a part of what made me who I am today. I will forever be grateful to my family and close friends who always believed in me and, therefore, helped me believe in myself.



Daphne Lee

BORN TO INSPIRE --DANCE MOGUL

Prepared by MagCloud for Dance Mogul Magazine. Get more at dancemogul.magcloud.com.