

political statement, and an expression of artistic vision devoid of race.

Directly following the media presentation, dancer David Browne moved confidently in the spotlight to interpret Rod's "WAY FARING STRANGER." Rod's son, Jason Rodgers, read a Langston Hughes poem, "Dream Variation", as a backdrop echo for the dance. In the Annex space, dance is in your face! After a few unsettling balance checks, David Browne settled into a solo filled with wonderfully lifted arm extensions, searching for identity, acceptance, acknowledgement, a place in the Sun. Near the end of the solo, the internal focus of the dancer ignited the stage with whirl pools of movement, affirming, turning, searching for solace, questioning, searching for a way to capture the dream of ecumenical equality.

"JAZZ FUSION" also choreographed by Rod Rodgers, features the entire Company (David Browne, Ronald Burton, Sarah Cosner, Danelle M. Dickson, Nami Kagami, Nikkia Reveillac, Kara Rosales, Tamara Sakoh, Jessica St. Vil, Kayoko Sakoh, and Kim Grier.) As The Leon Parker Musical Composition snaps through the house speakers, the beautifully pointed Company members enter. First one dancer, then two, extending, bopping soulfully.

The bop continues until eight dancers are popping and getting down. Clean lines decrease from full company to three dancers, then back to five, while executing wind mill movements, strong leg extensions, and a sassy attack attitude. The women are in excellent stride! When the music literally becomes louder, intensifying the syncopation, the dancers slam it to the bop, bop, bop, bop-bop, bop-allowing the audience to savor the rush of red hot jazz feet challenging the flesh to move; ending as a sensual tableau of HEAT.

Before intermission, the audience was exposed to "MERCY STREET", choreographed by Company Member, Kayoko Sakoh. The music of Peter Gabriel surrounds one chair that is placed center stage. Four still sitting figures pose on the floor, all lost in contemplation, a day dream, a state of longing. The LAUGHTER of a female child is heard as a voice over, while a young female dancer frolics and circles the dance floor. Like a playful sprite, she touches each figure. Each figure remains motionless. Silent. Distant. Lost in a Zen state of consciousness contemplating, "Mercy." The child is lifted to the shoulders of the one male dancer, David Browne, who was sitting in the chair.

Both exit as the dancers awaken and move out of their haze state to telegraph a stance of "Laughter to keep from Crying". The dancers become strong interpreters of symbolic "searching", perhaps looking for a way off the block of no return, or looking for a way to be released from the contemporary bondage of men, politics, racism, or plain old bad news cycles. The chore-

ography relies on quick duets and quartets that pulsate and transform into Yonvalou movement, arms reaching, always reaching as Afro-Jazz combinations built to a powerful complexity of release. There are no virtuoso tricks or pyro-technics required of the dancers, nor is it part of the choreography, but the spacing, sense of theatre, line, and driven context of "the search" for universal mercy, makes this dance a crowd pleaser.

"AMADINDA DANCES", choreographed by Sean Curran to the music of the East African amadinda (a wooden xylophone), closes the first half of the program with six dancers having fun with a syncopated strut line celebration of movement. It begins as a meeting of kindred souls introducing themselves to each other with little "how are you" nods of curiosity. The quirky costumes of white fronts, black backs, and red sleeves give the dance a harlequin frame. There is levity and backbone snap!

There is also pure unadulterated joy in the house, breaking out into bootie down shakes, diagonal leg lifts, and rippling arms that caress space with ease and aplomb. Suddenly, the dancers turn their backs to the audience as the stage lights dim to barely visible red light. This wall of shadows allows the dancers to quickly flip their costumes inside out, to be reintroduced as another art design. Dancer Ronald Burton brought the house down with laughter as he struggled, with great difficulty, to snatch his costume off and re-robe. Then in a prancing pitter patter of prancing feet, the dance breaks into an Afro-Arobic Rocket Line, a buzzard loop pattern, and a "praise shout" circle, and a host of precision spins and turns in solo, then in duet, until the dance ends with the dancers walking upstage for a last frolic of hot sauce, then, blackout!

The final dance of the second part of the program presented "SHE SAYINGS AND SOUL SONGS", is inspired by the music of High Priestess of Jazz, Nina Simone. Program notes informed us that the concept of this dance was originally choreographed by Rod Rodgers, and later finished by the current's Artistic Director, Kim Grier. The stories and images of women as "our mothers, our daughters, our sisters," are danced with extraordinary theatrical presence, yet the suite can still stand some major pruning and minor changes, to transform this dance into the tour de force signature piece that the material deserves.

"HOW LONG THIS TIME" begins highlighting all the women in a stationary pose, as a solo male figure, David Browne, opens the dance as an animated presence of life's incessant vulnerability. The drama is on the edge, rooted deep, and accompanied by a series of sensational spins that spiral to the floor, as the women move to offer an extension of "tenderness." In "WISH TO BE FREE", the women spin, and almost collide as whip lashing electric, until each one again, is "alone", unattended, to