

Dance troupe grooves to funky sound

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By Sara Bauknecht, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette



Adam Campos

The David Dorfman Dance troupe will perform "Prophets of Funk" to close the Pittsburgh Dance Council's 2010-11 season.

To some people, dance is just footsteps, head jerks and arm motions. To David Dorfman, it's something more: a form of passive resistance.

"Time spent dancing is not time spent hurting. That's my theory," said the New York City-based choreographer.

The improv-infused modern repertoire of his modest-sized company, David Dorfman Dance, is a type of "kinetic diplomacy," he said, that challenges audiences to take a closer look at themselves and their surroundings.

A recent attempt at this feat is "Prophets of Funk," which will close the Pittsburgh Dance Council's 2010-11 season on Saturday at the Byham Theater, Downtown.

'Prophets of Funk'

- **Where:** Byham Theater, Downtown.
- **When:** 8 p.m. Saturday.
- **Tickets:** \$19-\$45; www.pgharts.org or 412-456-6666.
- **Information:** A Q&A with David Dorfman Dance artists will

follow the
performance.
www.daviddorfmandance.com

In 1996, the Dance Council sponsored one of David Dorfman Dance's first Pittsburgh performances. Since then, the troupe has graced local stages a few more times, including collaborations in the late '90s at the Byham Theater with Dance Alloy while it was under the direction of Mark Taylor. In recent years, Mr. Dorfman has kept busy performing and teaching dance at Connecticut College, where his company is in residence and he chairs the dance department.

This weekend, the group has something new for Pittsburgh, an hour-long program set to the music of the soul, funk and rock band Sly and the Family Stone. It deals with embracing love and hope, even when life gets difficult, and is the latest installment in a trilogy of works about racial identity, freedom and political activism, Mr. Dorfman said.

"Prophets of Funk" takes audiences back to the '60s and '70s with its rainbow of psychedelic costumes and groovy moves. Steps range from refined and balletic to more jazz-like.

"I think the style is kind of a very athletic funk that refers to some of our modern and post-modern training," he said.

There also will be lots of partnering, pelvic thrusts and kick ball changes inspired by Mr. Dorfman's disco days. Some audience members may even be tapped to join in the dancing, he said.

"The idea is ... that we're showing with our bodies that anything is possible."

Some of the company's eight artists will accompany Mr. Dorfman on stage. One with Pittsburgh roots is Kyle Abraham, who studied at the Civic Light Opera Academy and Pittsburgh's Creative and Performing Arts high school. This tour is likely one of Mr. Abraham's last with the troupe because he plans to devote more time to his own New York company, Abraham.In.Motion, Mr. Dorfman said.

The performers with their bell bottom jeans and Afro hairdos shouldn't be perceived as fluffy fun. The characters aren't as one-dimensional as they seem. Audiences are tasked with figuring out their depths as they evolve, which Mr. Dorfman compares to peering past the stereotypes society sometimes chains to people.

But everyone isn't expected to take away the same message from the production -- or even have a passion for dance.

"It's really for everyday people," Mr. Dorfman said. "You don't need to know anything about dance to come enjoy our show."

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