

COSTUME & DANCEWEAR SHOWCASE

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Curtain Up: Robin Dawn Academy of Performing Arts

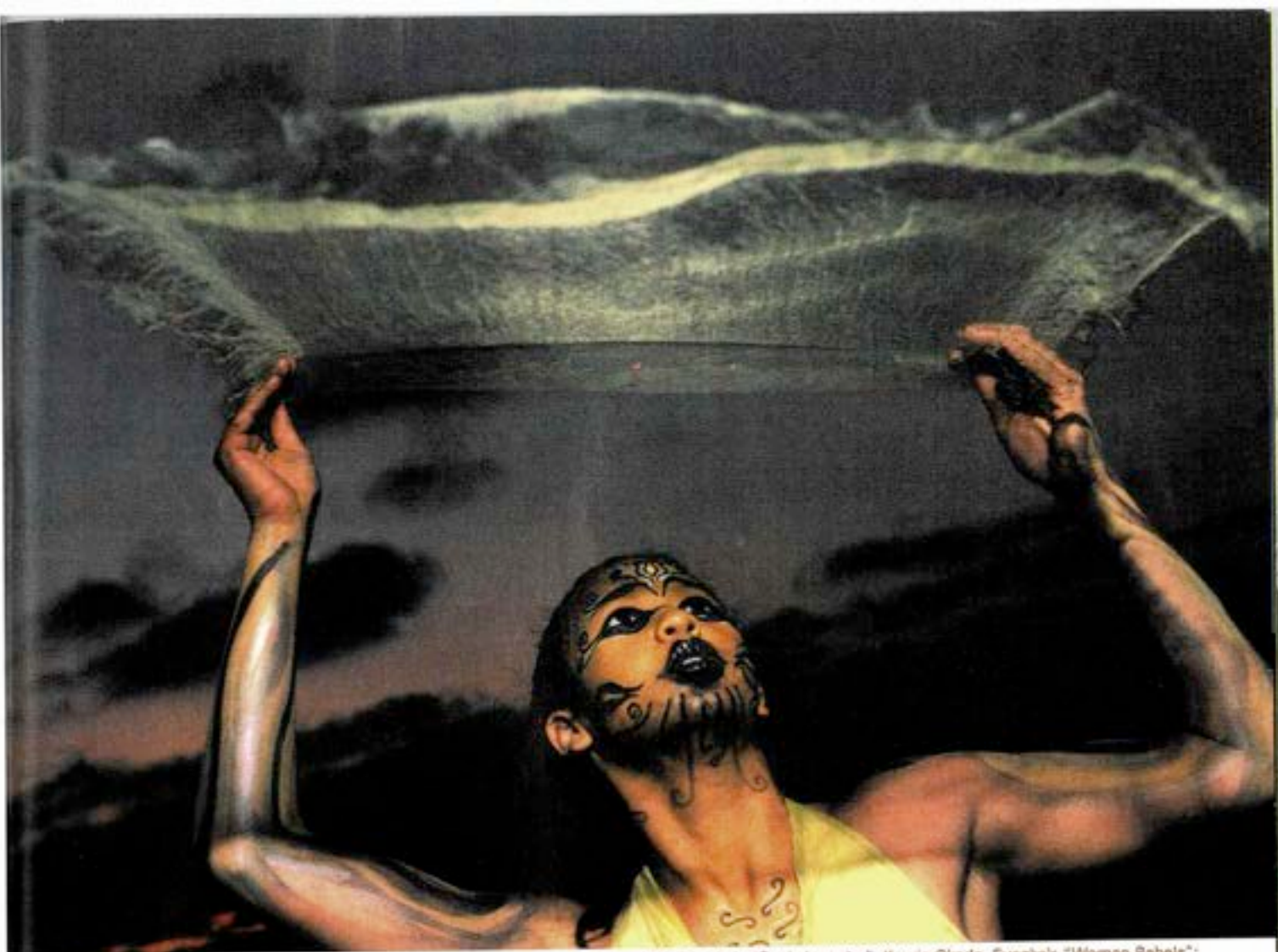


Eveoke Dance Theatre -

On the “Rise”

By Jasmine Rios





left: Eveoke's "Funkalosophy"; Kowie Okado, Eveoke's "Woman Rebels"; Elizabeth Marks, Eveoke's "Fishtales"

Eveoke Dance Theatre resides in the heart of Downtown San Diego's Gaslamp District; a bustling neighborhood filled with choice food and entertainment destinations. Inside a large warehouse-like structure with high ceilings, skylights, and two dance studios, is the home of Eveoke Dance Theatre. In many ways, the building façade encapsulates what the company is all about – community building and spreading cultural value through creating dances based on social and political issues. The company emerged in 1994, under co-founders Gina Angelique, Christopher Hall, and Nikki Dunnan. Gina Angelique, Artistic Director for thirteen years, has produced 27 original works for Eveoke Dance Theatre.

Eveoke is a small modern dance theatre company with a poignant message. For most, to watch Eveoke perform is an awakening experience. The dances tell

invigorating stories that engage the audience and carry them down a colorful foreign path. "I just make work as authentically as I can and hope it means something profound to someone somewhere," Angelique says. Fortunately for Angelique, inspiration and creativity flows as naturally as water.

As Artistic Director and Choreographer, Gina Angelique explains the fundamentals of Eveoke technique. "Eveoke technique is built off a six part center and principles of alignment, articulation, and intention through a medium of actualism." The Eveoke company dancers are trained in theatre arts as well as hip-hop, modern, and butoh dance forms with technical influences from Graham, Duncan, Limon, Horton, McKayle, and Alexander.

Among Angelique's most notable works is "Soul of a Young Girl...Dances of Anne Frank." Angelique shares, "I was

intimately drawn to the way Anne connected political and personal dots. I have always been drawn to biographies and the way an individual life acts as a funnel for social issues."

Long-time patron and Arts Educator, Lynn Susholtz has a solid understanding of Angelique's creative process and distinct body of work. Susholtz explains, "What makes Gina's work stand out from all the local choreographers for me is the content ... it's the intent of the work combined with the message and the skills of the performers that is so exceptional about this company."

The level of praise Angelique receives from patrons and arts critics is extensive. Dance Critic, Anne Marie Welsh of the *San Diego Union-Tribune* states, "Choreographic Talent is the rarest of artistic gifts. Gina Angelique's got it." Theatre Critic, Pat Launer of *KPBS On Air Magazine* shares, "Eveoke blurs the

lines between art forms, combining theatre, dance, music, and movement to tell stories and, at the same time, to inspire social action."

Angelique, along with Eveoke Dancer/Education Director, Ericka Moore made a powerful statement with their co-creation 'Funkalosophy,' a work based on the observation of how fences are used as barriers, predominantly in lower income areas. The performance is staged with dancers individually segregated by a fence, representing the oppression and division between classes and gender. In response to this production, Theatre Critic, Pat Launer for KPBS Radio explains, "The first act is jaw dropping... 'Funkalosophy' is a thrilling evening of entertainment and enlightenment, one that touches you, moves you and makes you think."

Eveoke Dance Theatre is known for more than creating such works as "Funkalosophy." Eveoke is the founding organization of San Diego's Annual "celebrate dance festival." Since 1996, the "celebrate dance festival" has been a major source of enriching the dance community through offering three full days of free dance performances and workshops in one of San Diego's most beautiful settings - Balboa Park.

Every August, San Diego becomes a dance destination for more than 75 dance companies and over fifteen thousand Southern California residents and visitors. An amalgam of dance forms are featured including, modern, jazz, tap, ballet, hip-hop, butoh, plus many contemporary and traditional folk dances from around the world. Several reputable dance companies participate on an annual basis including the San Diego Ballet and Urban Tribal Dance Company. Dance Critic, Jennifer de Poyen for the *San Diego Union-Tribune* notes, "The Celebrate Dance has become an indispensable part of the local dance scene."

Plans for the next "celebrate dance festival" from August 22-24, 2008 are already underway. Leading up to the main event in August, Eveoke will hold monthly workshops and mini performances at the Eveoke dance studio. Applications to participate in the event



Eveoke's "Rise";
Ericka Moore, Eveoke's "Fish Tales"

Photo: Jeffrey Brown

Photo: Christopher Hall

will be available on the Eveoke website in February 2008.

For all artists, a time comes when change is appropriate. Beginning in the Fall of 2007, Angelique has decided to move on to a new chapter in her life to focus on motherhood, dance, and her interest in environmental issues. "My work with Eveoke has been enormously fulfilling and I honor the Eveoke community deeply for the gifts I have received. The time is right for me. I also feel I have fulfilled my potential as Artistic Director." Angelique will continue as an Advisor to help carry out the Eveoke mission and co-founder Nikki Dunnan, will assume the role of Executive Director, while also continuing as Company Dancer and Master Teacher. Angelique shares, "Nikki Dunnan is extraordinary in every way and deserves a company as wonderful as Eveoke. I know she will be a great captain in our community."

In August 2007, Angelique's last work as resident Artistic Director was premiered. Dancers Nikki Dunnan, Becky Hurt, Douglas Johnson, Erika Malone, Elizabeth 'Froggy' Marks, Ericka Moore, and Charlene Penner performed in the multi-media production of "Rise - The California Earth Project," a collaborative effort by Gina Angelique and Eveoke Producer, Christopher Hall. For this documentary dance, Angelique and 14

prominent environmentalists compiled over one year of research based on environmental studies of California's most at risk regions. With so many environmental issues in the world today, choosing which subject matter to use for the documentary dance was difficult. After much debate, the issues addressed in "Rise" were narrowed down to water pollution, energy debates, air quality and asthma, nuclear waste disposal, wilderness protection, logging in the Sequoias, and the water crises in the Klamath Water Basin.

Angelique confides, "Rise was inspired by a growing interest in the way all issues converge in the environmental movement. I love interviewing and listening in the community for dance inspiration. The stories show each of us our own ability to 'rise' and meet the environmental challenges of the 21st century. "Rise" shows that the health of our earth is inseparable from our own health and well-being."

When asked, "What do you want your audience to take from "Rise - The California Earth Project," Angelique enthusiastically responded, "Courage, compassion, and an unavoidable canyon/scream in the gut and throat which requires immediate and extended action." Angelique believes that a project as significant as "Rise" must continue to evolve. Plans to create a follow up piece based on water issues in California will be the next related project on the horizon.

Beyond these years, Angelique considers where she sees Eveoke Dance Theatre 20 years from now. She responds, "I see a big beautiful building filled with astonishing young artists who are fulfilling their potential as agents of social improvement. I see a raging community of patrons who fight to spend every last dollar making Eveoke accessible to all, and healthy through and through. I see a new generation of Eveoke dance stewards."

To learn more about Eveoke Dance Theatre visit www.eveoke.org. For questions or comments, please email minacommunications@gmail.com.