

Dance

AileyCamp Gives At-Risk Youth a Stage and a Microphone

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Plié or Petit Saut?

Nietzsche declared, "One must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star." It's doubtful that the existential philosopher anticipated chaos giving birth to *Dancing With the Stars*, where B-listers tango for more fame. It's more likely that he would have been down with the kind of dancing stars at this weekend's Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation's AileyCamp performance.

These stars take the shape of 100 at-risk middle-schoolers who have spent the past six weeks participating in a free dance camp. There, teachers, including former Alvin Ailey company member Yusha-Marie Sorzano, taught discipline and self-esteem through creative expression and lyrical movement. This Saturday, the program culminates with a professionally choreographed performance of ballet, jazz, modern, and West African dance pieces, interspersed with skits and spoken word.

In addition to dance classes, campers attended personal development and creative communication courses, and developed spoken word pieces that gave voice to their individual struggles. Each day began with group affirmations where students declared their self-worth and promised to pay attention with mind, body, and spirit. (Example affirmation: "I will not use the word *can't* to define my possibilities.")

Executive Vice President of the Adrienne Arsht Center, Scott Shiller, describes it as "one of my favorite parts of the camp experience. ... It really sums up why this is so important to us." He says he feels honored that Miami is one of nine cities hosting the program for the second year in a row.



Flashdance, what a feeling.

The culminating performance opens with a tribute to Judith Jamison, artistic director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and presents a diverse choreography of ballet, jazz, Horton-based modern, and West African dance. Shiller describes it as a moving performance that "bring[s] the community together for a transformative experience."



Imagine your a tall tree and your branches reach to the sky.

*The AileyCamp performance is this Saturday at 7 p.m. at the **Knight Concert Hall** (1300 Biscayne Blvd., Miami) and is free. Call 305-949-6722 or visit www.arshtcenter.org.*

--Gabriela Garcia