



## Legendary Garth Fagan Dance makes its Miami debut

### Choreographer premieres *Madiba* — a tribute to Nelson Mandela

Creative individuals communicate through a variety of means including the spoken word, provocative thoughts and ideas in printed form or even passionate messages that are conveyed to the listener in song. But for Garth Fagan, the 71-year-old Jamaican native and founder of Garth Fagan Dance (GFD), there is no better way to communicate than through dance. He has choreographed for Dance Theatre of Harlem, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and was the creative mastermind behind the dance that was featured in Broadway’s “The Lion King.”

Last Saturday, the Tony Award-winning choreographer brought his acclaimed company to the South Miami-Dade Cultural Arts Center for the premier of his new dance, “Madiba,” a tribute to Nelson Mandela. It was the Miami debut for Garth Fagan Dance Company, which recently marked its 40th season.

While this writer could speak at length on the many achievements of Fagan, it is his unique style of choreography that must be addressed — it is not only physically challenging for the dancers but at times has a way of almost hypnotizing the audience. Norwood Pennewell, joined GFD in 1978 and is the current rehearsal director. Steve Humphrey is an original member of the company and has been with them for 39 years. Both were featured in several pieces and maintained a frantic pace, despite their age. They are part of the “old school” that works with a superb cadre of young dancers.

Nicolette DePass, born in Jamaica and Vitolio Jeune, a native of Haiti were by far two of the most talented dancers on stage. Both showcased their talents in solos, duets and trios as well as in full ensemble pieces. Fagan’s dance often included segments where the music stops but the dancers continue, relying on their own internal clocks and the sounds of their feet to maintain the rhythm. Other dancers that were outstanding and should be watched in the future included: Wynton Rice, Khama Kgari and Lindsay Renea. GFD brings a majestic combination of modern dance, ballet and Afro-Caribbean styles to the stage. The show was breathtaking.

**By D. Kevin McNeir**

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