

PARAMOUNT PRESENTS



THE OPULENCE OF INTEGRITY

Study Guide courtesy of the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts

CHRISTAL BROWN

Christal Brown is the Founder of INSPIRIT, Project: BECOMING, the creator of the Liquid Strength training module for dance and the Chair of Dance at Middlebury College.

Brown is a native of Kinston, North Carolina, where she remembers cleaning up on Saturday mornings as a child to the music of the Chi-Lites, Marvin Gaye, and Shirley Caesar. These rituals innately produced a strong desire in her to make all work melodic, sensual, meaningful and set to music. Brown has danced since she was released from the confines of piano lessons at age 9. By navigating her way through narrow corridors of segregated understandings onto the stages of beautiful theaters, community centers, churches, classrooms, and cultural epiphanies, Brown has found the true meaning of grace. Her path of self-discovery has been influenced by trailblazers such as Chuck Davis, Bill T. Jones, Andrea E. Woods, Liz Lerman, and Jawole Willa Jo Zollar. Through these conduits of movement matter she was given the opportunity, permission, and responsibility to move and move others. She is a mover, a warrior of change and transformation, living out experiences her double amputee father recounted from his war-ridden dreams. The melodies in her body are melancholic and brought to life through the music; seen rather than heard through her choreography.

Brown combines her athleticism, creativity, love for people, and passion for teaching to create works that redefine the art of dance and the structure of the field.



WHAT TO EXPECT

THE OPULENCE OF INTEGRITY IS A THEATRICAL, MULTIMEDIA ENSEMBLE WORK INSPIRED BY THE PUBLIC LIFE AND INNER SEARCHING OF BOXING'S OUTSPOKEN SUPERSTAR, MUHAMMAD ALI. INSPIRED BY ALI'S CAREER AS A BOXER AND LIFE AS A SOCIAL ACTIVIST, PUBLIC MARTYR, AND HUMAN BEING, CHOREOGRAPHER CHRISTAL BROWN DEPLOYS HER ECLECTIC MOVEMENT VERNACULAR TO ILLUSTRATE THE TURMOIL OF A LIFE INFUSED BY DIVINITY YET MISINTERPRETED BY HUMANITY.

BY USING ALI AS AN ARCHETYPE, THE OPULENCE OF INTEGRITY EXPLORES THE HOMOGENEOUS INNER STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY AS IT PERTAINS TO MEN OF COLOR IN THE UNITED STATES.

THIS WORK TAKES AN INTIMATE AND EXPANSIVE LOOK AT THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND SPIRITUAL TRAPPINGS THAT CONTINUALLY PROHIBIT FREEDOM, WHILE DRAWING CLEAR PARALLELS OF WAR, RESISTANCE, AND PERSEVERANCE THROUGH A HISTORICAL LENS.

BROWN SAYS THAT, "TO BE BORN, BRANDED BY HISTORY, BURDENED BY RESPONSIBILITY, AND INSPIRED TOWARDS GREATNESS REQUIRES A COMMITTED HEART AND AN OPULENCE OF INTEGRITY."

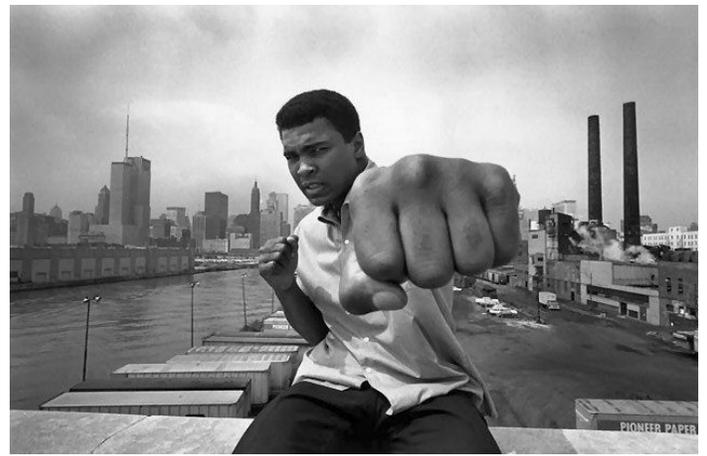
A DANCE PIECE IN 4 MOVEMENTS FEATURING 6 DANCERS, WHO EACH, AT TIMES, REPRESENT THE VOICE OF ALI, BUT ALSO THEMSELVES, EXPLORING THEMES OF INDIVIDUALITY, IDENTITY, WHAT IS MEANS TO BE LEGENDARY.

A STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO "GETTING" DANCE (ALSO, THINGS TO EXPLORE WHILE WATCHING)

(ADAPTED FROM THE PERFORMING ARTS SOCIETY OF ACADIANA)

WATCH THE PATTERNS CREATED BY THE DANCERS ON STAGE

- What groupings do you see?
- Which dancers seem to be working together or in opposition?
- How many dancers do you see in the movement?
- Are the dancers all moving or are some using stillness?
- Do the dancers form any shapes with their bodies?
- Do the dancers seem to be imitating any moves or actions from everyday life?

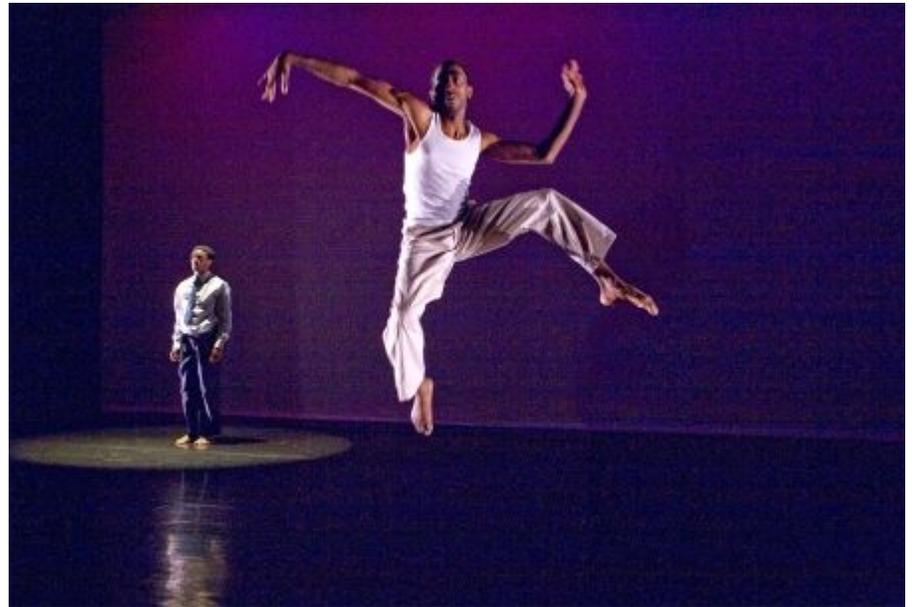


LISTEN TO THE MUSIC

- Is the music fast or slow?
- Is the rhythm even, or choppy?
Does it change?
- If you close your eyes and just listen to the music, what do you picture?
What images do you see?

CHECK OUT THE COSTUMES, SET, LIGHTS

- What structures or fabrics are on stage with the dancers? Do they make the stage look like another place?
- How do the lights change in the different pieces? What colors do you see in the lights? Do you see any patterns in the lights or shadows?
- How do the costumes contribute to the performance? Do the colors, shapes, or textures the dancers wear tell you anything?



QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE, POST-PERFORMANCE

- What kind of emotions did you have when you were watching the show? What kind of emotions did you see being expressed by the performers?
- What kind of movements did you see? Fast or slow? High or low? Smooth or jumpy?
- How did the performers hold their bodies during the dances? How was their positioning different or similar to other dance you have seen?
- What did the music feel like? What effect did it have on you as an audience member? How did the rhythms affect you?
- Did you see any elements of storytelling or narrative in this performance? If yes, in what way?
- Were there any moments in the performance that made you think of a different art form or a different kind of expression (performance-based, visual art, literature, etc.)? What was it and why?

MUHAMMAD ALI: THE LEGEND

"SERVICE TO OTHERS IS THE RENT YOU PAY FOR YOUR ROOM HERE ON EARTH."

Muhammad Ali (1942-2016) was an American former heavyweight champion boxer and one of the greatest sporting figures of the 20th century. An Olympic gold medalist and the first fighter to capture the heavyweight title three times, Ali won 56 times in his 21-year professional career. Ali's outspokenness on issues of race, religion and politics made him a controversial figure during his career, and the heavyweight's quips and taunts were as quick as his fists. Born Cassius Clay Jr., Ali changed his name in 1964 after joining the Nation of Islam. Citing his religious beliefs, he refused military induction and was stripped of his heavyweight championship and banned from boxing for three years during the prime of his career. Parkinson's syndrome severely impaired Ali's motor skills and speech, but he remained active as a humanitarian and goodwill ambassador.

MUHAMMAD ALI'S EARLY YEARS AND AMATEUR CAREER

Cassius Marcellus Clay Jr., the elder son of Cassius Marcellus Clay Sr. (1912-1990) and Odessa Grady Clay (1917-1994), was born on January 17, 1942, in Louisville, Kentucky. It was a red-and-white Schwinn that steered the future heavyweight champion to the sport of boxing. When his beloved bicycle was stolen, a tearful 12-year-old Clay reported the theft to Louisville police officer Joe Martin (1916-1996) and vowed to pummel the culprit. Martin, who was also a boxing trainer, suggested that the upset youngster first learn how to fight, and he took Clay under his wing. Six weeks later, Clay won his first bout in a split decision.

By age 18 Clay had captured two national Golden Gloves titles, two Amateur Athletic Union national titles and 100 victories against eight losses. After graduating high school, he traveled to Rome and won the light heavyweight gold medal in the 1960 Summer Olympics.

Clay won his professional boxing debut on October 29, 1960, in a six-round decision. From the start of his pro career, the 6-foot-3-inch heavyweight overwhelmed his opponents with a combination of quick, powerful jabs and foot speed, and his constant braggadocio and self-promotion earned him the nickname "Louisville Lip."

MUHAMMAD ALI: HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION OF THE WORLD

After winning his first 19 fights, including 15 knockouts, Clay received his first title shot on February 25, 1964, against reigning heavyweight champion Sonny Liston (1932-1970). Although he arrived in Miami Beach, Florida, a 7-1 underdog, the 22-year-old Clay relentlessly taunted Liston before the fight, promising to "float like a butterfly, sting like a bee" and predicting a knockout. When Liston failed to answer the bell at the start of the seventh round, Clay was indeed crowned heavyweight champion of the world. In the ring after the fight, the new champ roared, "I am the greatest!"

At a press conference the next morning, Clay, who had been seen around Miami with controversial Nation of Islam member Malcolm X (1925-1965), confirmed the rumors of his conversion to Islam. On March 6, 1964, Nation of Islam leader Elijah Muhammad (1897-1975) bestowed on Clay the name of Muhammad Ali.

Ali solidified his hold on the heavyweight championship by knocking out Liston in the first round of their rematch on May 25, 1965, and he defended his title eight more times. Then, with the Vietnam War raging, Ali showed up for his scheduled induction into the U.S. Armed Forces on April 28, 1967. Citing his religious beliefs, he refused to serve. Ali was arrested, and the New York State Athletic Commission immediately suspended his boxing license and revoked his heavyweight belt.

Convicted of draft evasion, Ali was sentenced to the maximum of five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine, but he remained free while the conviction was appealed. Many saw Ali as a draft dodger, and his popularity plummeted. Banned from boxing for three years, Ali spoke out against the Vietnam War on college campuses. As public attitudes turned against the war, support for Ali grew. In 1970 the New York State Supreme Court ordered his boxing license reinstated, and the following year the U.S. Supreme Court overturned his conviction in a unanimous decision.

MUHAMMAD ALI: THE LEGEND

MUHAMMAD ALI'S RETURN TO THE RING

After 43 months in exile, Ali returned to the ring on October 26, 1970, and knocked out Jerry Quarry (1945-1999) in the third round. On March 8, 1971, Ali got his chance to regain his heavyweight crown against reigning champ Joe Frazier (1944-2011) in what was billed as the "Fight of the Century." The undefeated Frazier floored Ali with a hard left hook in the final round. Ali got up but lost in a unanimous decision, experiencing his first defeat as a pro. Ali won his next 10 bouts before being defeated by Ken Norton (1943-). He won the rematch six months later in a split decision and gained further revenge in a unanimous decision over Frazier in a non-title rematch. The victory gave the 32-year-old Ali a title shot against 25-year-old champion George Foreman (1949-). The October 30, 1974, fight in Kinshasa, Zaire, was dubbed the "Rumble in the Jungle." Ali, the decided underdog, employed his "rope-a-dope" strategy, leaning on the ring ropes and absorbing a barrage of blows from Foreman while waiting for his opponent to tire. The strategy worked, and Ali won in an eighth-round knockout to regain the title stripped from him seven years prior.

Ali successfully defended his title in 10 fights, including the memorable "Thrilla in Manila" on October 1, 1975, in which his bitter rival Frazier, his eyes swollen shut, was unable to answer the bell for the final round. Ali also defeated Norton in their third meeting in a unanimous 15-round decision.

On February 15, 1978, an aging Ali lost his title to Leon Spinks (1953-) in a 15-round split decision. Seven months later, Ali defeated Spinks in a unanimous 15-round decision to reclaim the heavyweight crown and become the first fighter to win the world heavyweight boxing title three times. After announcing his retirement in 1979, Ali launched a brief, unsuccessful comeback. However, he was overwhelmed in a technical knockout loss to Larry Holmes (1949-) in 1980, and he dropped a unanimous 10-round decision to Trevor Berbick (1954-2006) on December 11, 1981. After the fight, the 39-year-old Ali retired for good with a career record of 56 wins, five losses and 37 knockouts.

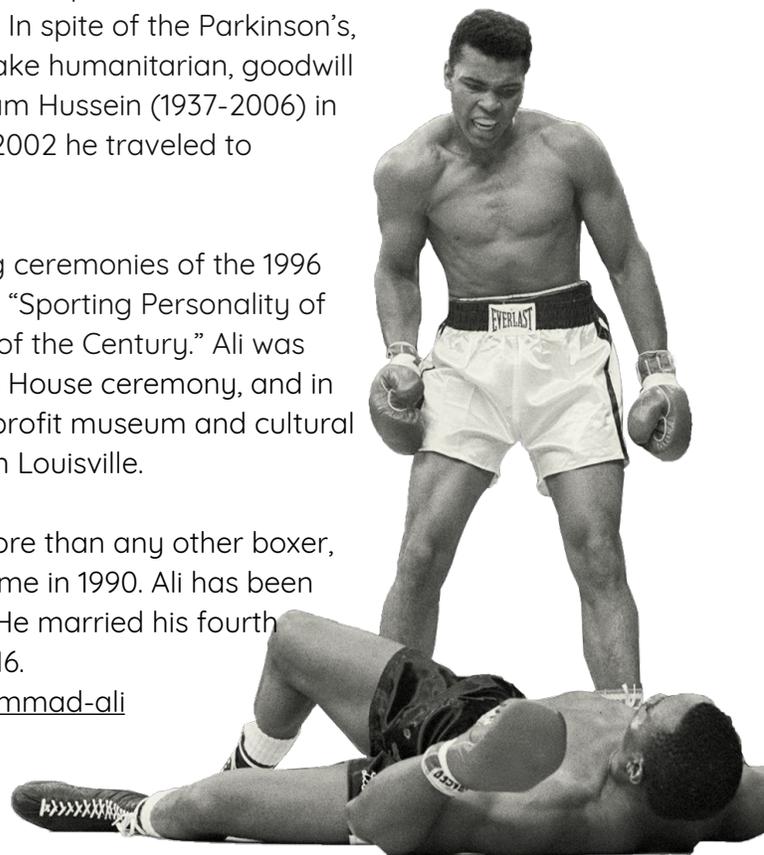
MUHAMMAD ALI'S LATER YEARS AND LEGACY

In 1984 Ali was diagnosed with Parkinson's syndrome, possibly connected to the severe head trauma suffered during his boxing career. The former champion's motor skills slowly declined, and his movement and speech were limited. In spite of the Parkinson's, Ali remained in the public spotlight, traveling the world to make humanitarian, goodwill and charitable appearances. He met with Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein (1937-2006) in 1990 to negotiate the release of American hostages, and in 2002 he traveled to Afghanistan as a United Nations Messenger of Peace.

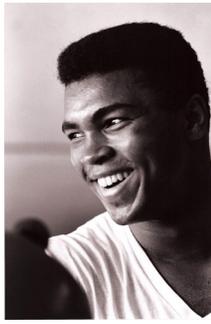
Ali had the honor of lighting the cauldron during the opening ceremonies of the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta. In 1999 Ali was voted the BBC's "Sporting Personality of the Century," and Sports Illustrated named him "Sportsman of the Century." Ali was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in a 2005 White House ceremony, and in the same year the \$60 million Muhammad Ali Center, a nonprofit museum and cultural center focusing on peace and social responsibility, opened in Louisville.

Ring Magazine named Ali "Fighter of the Year" five times, more than any other boxer, and he was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1990. Ali has been married four times and has seven daughters and two sons. He married his fourth wife, Yolanda, in 1986. Ali died at the age of 74 on June 3, 2016.

Source: <http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/muhammad-ali>



ACTIVITIES



THINGS TO LOOK FOR:

- Moments of Triumph
- Moments of Defeat
- Moments of Individuality
- Different manifestations of Ali: athlete, activist, father, man, fighter (in and out of the ring)

MAKING AN IMPACT

"I believe the work is important for young people because it illustrates the power that one person had to change the hearts and minds of millions. It illustrates how standing up for what you believe in can allow you to find freedom from societal pressure and create a life that is truly authentic. I believe in this age of social media, cyber-bullying, and solo play, it's important to let young people know how their actions affect them as well as the communities they are a part of."

- Christal Brown on why this piece is important to young people

Using this quote, explore the following prompts in conversation or writing with students.

- What does it mean to live authentically?
- How can one person make an impact on their community? What are some examples of people who've made great impacts on their communities and beyond?
- How do you think social media and technology affect the way we interact with others? Do you think they have implications for making change, making an impact?

TO BE A LEGEND:

- How do you define "legendary?" (Christal speaks about legendary as always remembered, not always understood, crossing boundaries, having name recognition across geography and culture)
- What does it take to become legendary?
- Who is, in your opinion, legendary?
- In today's society, how do branding, social media sharing, virality impact one's ability to be legendary?

POST-SHOW COLLAGE ACTIVITY

Invite students to look through old magazines and newspapers to find images and words that reflect their thoughts and feelings as they were watching the Puremovement dancers perform. Have students cut out the images and words and create a collage which represents the experience, the ideas that came up for them during the performance, and the impressions they were left with. Discuss the collages as a class. Encourage students to tell each other what they see in others' collages as well as allowing students to discuss their own collages.

POST-SHOW WRITING ACTIVITY

After seeing the performance, invite students to discuss what they saw and record their impressions creatively. Students can write a short poem about the dance they watched, the ways that their understanding of dance may have changed, elements of the performance that surprised them, and ways that the dancers challenged their ideas about movement.

CREATIVELY TELLING YOUR STORY

Explore the idea of the "creative narrator." Ask students to come up with a small anecdote from their lives that they are willing to share. Ask them to tell this story (orally, in writing, or using another medium...dance, visual art, etc.) with just the concrete facts, just reporting the events. Then have them retell the story adding emotions, drama, rich description, memories, feelings. Which story was more compelling? Which story felt like a more authentic telling and gave the audience a better sense of the event?

MOVEMENT MEMORIES

Invite each student to choose one particular movement from the show that stands out in their memory. Remind them of the different types of moves they saw and ask for volunteers to demonstrate the movements as best they remember them. As each volunteer performs a movement, invite everyone to create their own interpretation of that same movement and perform these pieces simultaneously. (Hint: use the lights in your room to cue the start and end of the "performances.") Ask the students what made these movements memorable.