

“Black Boy Jungle” at the Town & County Club

Arien Wilkerson and Tnmot Aztro Dance Collaborators danced a premier production of “Black Boy Jungle” on June 18th at the Town & County on Woodland Street. Those who arrived early heard a buzzing sound nearby. The buzzing sound came from two brass players – tuba and trumpet – warming up their instruments. By the end of the evening, everyone was abuzz with excitement over the modern dance performance they had just seen.

Two singer-songwriters, Trinity Powell and Keila Myles, each enhanced the stylish scene with rhythmic grooves before and during portions of the dance program. Ellis Island Band layered live music onto recorded selections from Wrex Mason, Lee Scratch Perry, King Tubby, Sister Nancy, and Flying Lotus Loversmelt 3.

The event was part of a celebration of art and culture under the umbrella of AHNA (Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association). This event was sponsored by the Knox Foundation, Aetna, Lyman Heritage Foundation, and the City of Hartford Arts & Heritage Jobs Grant Program.



“Black Boy Jungle” depicts the story of immigration to America through contemporary dance. Using clothing from suitcases and trunks, it hints at the difficulty of finding a sense of identity in the jungle of “cultural misrepresentation and generalization, acquired through public schooling and our consumer-driven society.” (Quotes are from the program.) The clothing represents “layer upon layer of judgments and opinions,” but doesn’t tell “who we are at our core.”

“Black Boy Jungle” is an energetic, muscular, adult portrayal of real internal struggles to find one’s place in a land of immigrants. Arien Wilkerson and Tnmot Aztro seem to have found a place in Asylum Hill with a devoted fan base. As Arien’s mentor Deborah Goffe told the audience, “Black culture is worth celebrating in Hartford!” For more information on this dynamic dance group, please visit www.tnmotaztro.com.
