

Insight From the Inside on Hip-Hop



Andrea Mohin/The New York Times

Kwikstep (Gabriel Dionisio) and Rokafella (Anita Garcia) explore hip-hop in "Innaviews."

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Full Circle's "Innaviews," performed on Thursday night at [Dance Theater Workshop](#), is more of a Valentine's Day show than a Christmastime event. On one level the piece celebrates the loving, enduring relationship of Gabriel Dionisio and Anita Garcia, the husband-and-wife team who founded the hip-hop dance collective Full Circle in 1996 and still direct it. Known professionally as Rokafella (Ms. Garcia) and Kwikstep (Mr. Dionisio), the two are breakdance stars in their own right. They are also funny and very, very smart.

That playful intelligence is one of the points of "Innaviews," a series of devastatingly on-target interviews in which Rokafella and Kwikstep impersonate characters intent on discovering the heart and history of hip-hop. One is a prim college student gathering material for her thesis from a laid-back hip-hop star. Another is a sweetly thuggish radio show host and his guest. There's also a pompous professorial type, possibly a sociologist, grilling a young dancer about her past.

The assumption is that hip-hoppers are stupid, crude, promiscuous and drug-addicted. There are timely overtones in the material, given the current slinging of stereotypes on the campaign trail in Iowa. "Innaviews" also recalls Jérôme Bel's "Pichet Klunchun and Myself," a probing of another seemingly exotic culture, seen at the Workshop last month. Dance appears to be moving these days from product to process and to deconstruction.

But "Innaviews" is terrific entertainment, beginning with the large graffiti bed designed by Garland Farwell in which Kwik-step and Rokafella wake up at the start of the show. The two dancers, ur-hip-hoppers, break away from the talk repeatedly to demonstrate some classic moves as they travel together through a good bit of cultural history.


Everything works. Their script is well written and revealing, and the family album of projections, designed by Ajahne (First Person) Santa Ana, is vivid and classy. Dramaturgical attention is often the kiss of death in dance, but Rokafella and Kwikstep have chosen the right collaborators in Gamal Chasten, who directed the show, and Benji Reid and Glenn Gordon, who helped develop it.

Best of all, the two dancers recreate a tender, knowing relationship onstage and make a strong case for Full Circle's brand of hip-hop as their thriving progeny, a reassuringly unruly, well-tended child.

Full Circle performs tonight at Dance Theater Workshop, 219 West 19th Street, Chelsea; (212) 924-0077 or dtw.org.

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