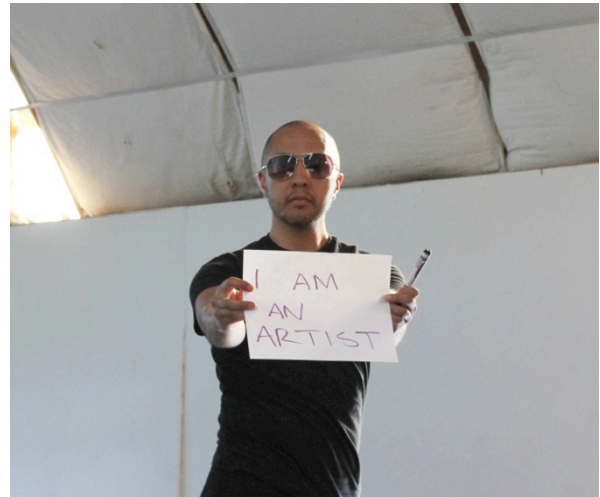


The Choreographic Voice of Christopher K. Morgan

October 11, 2013

At this year's Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement Conference, 2013 NACF Dance Fellow Christopher K. Morgan (Native Hawaiian) shared an unforgettable performance of "Unpredictable Repeat Hesitation."

Giving attitude hidden behind dark-glasses, the dancer took the stage and held up a sign proclaiming, "I am an Artist." Audience members took turns selecting random-play music to which he spontaneously choreographed. If the audience liked one of his dance moves, they could call, "Repeat!" to the delight of conference attendees, he would rewind and do it again.



The opportunity to perform in his homeland of Hawaii held great meaning for the D.C.-based artist. Growing up in California, Morgan learned hula and music with his family from his Hapa, or blended ethnicity parents, never realizing the meaning this early training would hold. "Those early lessons left powerful, resonant impressions on me. In practicing Western dance forms of ballet, jazz and modern, I found a natural affinity to forms rooted in my childhood studies of Hawaiian and Polynesian music and dance," said Morgan. "In developing movement, my natural tendencies include a sinuous use of the spine, hips and hands, and a grounded quality of weight, which are all deeply connected with Hula."

As a choreographer, Morgan stands out for his innovation of form, fascinating collaborations and his capacity as a storyteller. "I believe my impulse to create dance with meaning is directly related to Hula, a tradition having narrative, myth, history and oral tradition inherent to the form," said Morgan. "As my choreographic voice continued to define itself, I wanted to learn more about Hawaiian music and dance. I applied for a Native Arts and Cultures Foundation Artist Fellowship to help me develop contemporary dance work that explores the intersection of Native and Western dance forms, as well as issues including race, cultural identity and displacement."

"As a Native Hawaiian, I am a member of an extremely small and rare community, about which little is known in the world at large," explained Morgan. "The work I create as a contemporary dance choreographer can contribute to a greater knowledge and understanding of my community. I feel compelled to make work that shares the stories of Hawaiian people in an innovative way with audiences that might not otherwise see art by and about Hawaiians."



With the support of an NACF Dance Fellowship, Morgan has been able to experiment with new movements, collaborate with other artists and continue to develop solo dance theater works. "To see the work to its fruition needs careful thought, attention and a substantial investment of time," said Morgan. "The generous NACF Fellowship afforded me time to investigate, to create and to find the right collaborators. The support gave me the opportunity to dive deeper into the development of innovative work, with artistic integrity that honors my Native Hawaiian people."