

Resistance Isn't So Futile

Ana Maria Alvarez of Contra-Tiempo pushes boundaries

DANCE | “Originally, I created the work — about three years ago — when there was a lot of tension in the country around immigration reform,” explains choreographer Ana Maria Alvarez about the beginnings of her Los Angeles-based dance company, Contra-Tiempo, which fuses salsa, Afro-Cuban, West African and hip-hop styles.

“There was this whole sort of agreement in our society at the time,” she continues, “where being anti-what-was-happening — in terms of being against what was going on with immigration reform — was being anti-American.”

This realization provoked Alvarez to more deeply explore this theme as a part of what was her senior-thesis concert at the time, but which, after touring New York with it, sprouted into Contra-Tiempo.

“That whole idea of pushing back as being anti-American interested me, in reference to salsa as a dance form” says Alvarez. “In salsa, resistance is fundamental. So if you don’t have resistance between partners, you don’t exist, because without the push-pull relationship, you can’t function as a couple.”

Using this idea as a “metaphor for how resistance and pushing back is actually fundamental in our culture and society,” Contra-Tiempo became more than a hip-isolating dance ensemble.

The company’s members



TYRONE DOMINGO

ACTION FIGURE: Contra-Tiempo’s choreography is varied and energetic.

became activists in the community with the mission “to be alive, to be heard and to be empowered.”

And this weekend on their first stop in D.C., Alvarez and company present a new work titled “I Dream America.” With the issues of immigration and the disaster of Hurricane Katrina as its backdrop, the piece seeks to engage the “tensions and commonalities,” as Alvarez says, of the black and Latino communities.

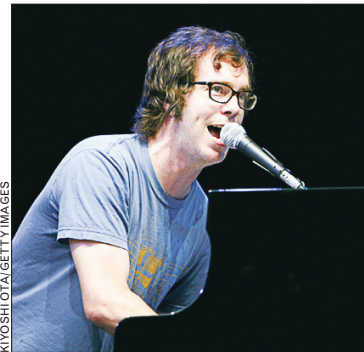
And, according to Alvarez, “really bringing to life what’s possible in the world if people communicated with one another effectively.”

DARONA WILLIAMS (EXPRESS)

→ *Dance Place, 3225 8th St. NE; Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 7 p.m., \$22; 202-269-1600, danceplace.org. (Brookland/CUA)*

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