Your Name

Instructor Name

Course Number

Date

Live Dance Critique: Black Iris by Jeremy McQueen

Ballet is a dance form that needs no introduction. It is inspiring, filled with emotions and awe-worthy. However, this beautiful and enigmatic form of expression has always been dominated by lithe, white bodies moving in harmony with the music. Jeremy McQueen, an award-winning choreographer is responsible for diversifying this field of art, giving it a new narrative, a definition, and a context. McQueen named this performance as the “Black Iris Project”, which has been applauded by audiences across the country. It harnesses the creative spirit of the black community, connecting their history and the journey that has taken to come to where this community is, at present. It exemplified the ideology behind black lives matter is a perpetual form of art that leaves behind a memorable impression. It is a representation of the struggles they have had to put themselves through. They may have been liberated from oppression, but the journey that has brought them where they are today needs context which is provided by Black Iris.

The Black Iris Project recently debuted at the Miller Outdoor Theater in Houston, Texas, where the dancers put on a spectacular show. The program included some of their signature works, such as the *A Mother’s Rite* and *Black Iris III* which have both been inspired by Georgia O’Keefe. A Mother’s Rite explores the griefs that a mother goes through, especially after losing her son to murder. This piece was a solo performance, one that was packed with so much emotion and finesse, that it showed how a mother’s heart breaks when her child dies because of police brutality. This is made worse by the fact that this brutality took place not because her child was at fault, but because of the color of his skin is unbearably painful, a fact that is reflected in every movement of the dancer. The piece was no more than 30 or so minutes long and to the *Rite of Spring*, but the artist on stage was so engrossing that everything else ceased to exist.

The second performance, Black Iris III was also inspired by Georgia O’Keeffe’s painting and is a stunning reflection of that work of art. It puts on display the persevering spirit of the women in the black community and how these individuals are not only able to live life to the fullest despite the odds stacked against them. It shows the challenges faced by the women, at work, at their homes and even in ballet, a form of dance which is predominated by pale individuals. This piece has been inspired by some of the strongest women in McQueen’s life and in his own words, exemplifies their confidence, courage, determination, and faith that makes them stand out as black women. This piece was around 30 minutes long as well and set to "Piano Trio No. 2 in C Minor, Op. 66" by Felix Mendelssohn.

Both these performances inspired me, while also left me speechless. Ballet has always been graceful, but this was a poignant experience. The things that were being put on display were unique and the narrative behind them beautifully portrayed through music and choreography. However, neither of them could hold a candle to *The Storm.* This piece debuted for the first time in Houston, but the beauty was the performance was too unbearable to hold. Even as I write this, I can hear the music ringing in my ear. The music, the performance, even the way the dancers depicted the horrors that followed after Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Harvey. But, it also showed how it brought the community together, despite the horror it raged, it also showed the humanitarian side of our nature, the selflessness we can hold and the courage we can give and take from one another.

The performance was put on free of cost. However, having been through the moving experience that it was, I believe that the performance, the finesse of the dancers and the mindfulness of the choreographer were priceless, making this a magical experience.