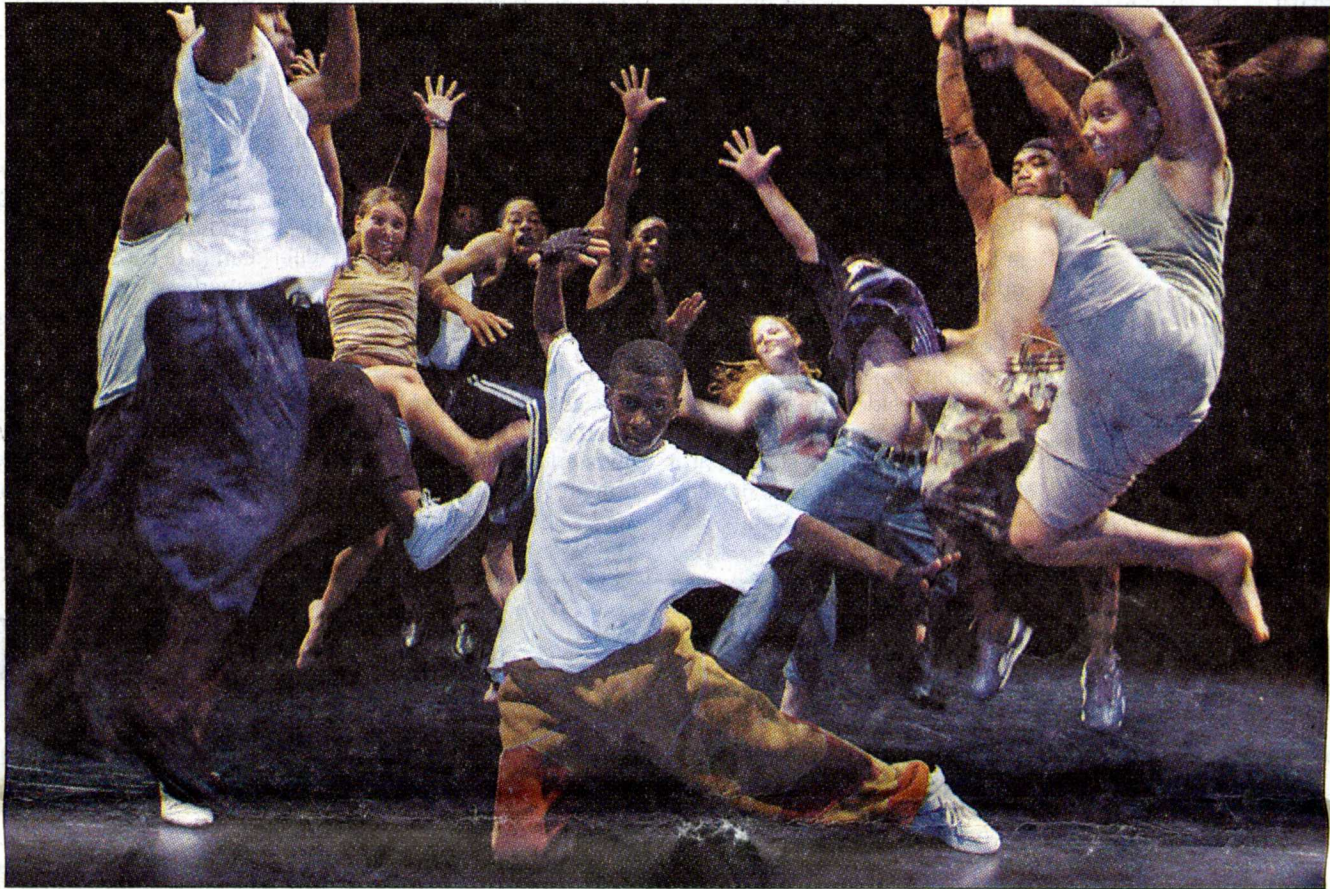


# 'Requiem for New Orleans: A Hip-Hop Eulogy'



STAFF PHOTOS BY T. ORTEGA GAINES – ogaines@charlotteobserver.com

Twilight Repertory Company is a dance troupe that includes UNC Charlotte faculty and students. The group recently was accepted to perform this month at the NYC Fringe Dance Festival. Twilight will perform Tuesday in Charlotte.

## Big Easy life chronicled

*Musical stage show to raise money Tuesday in Charlotte, before heading off to New York*

BY EMILY A. BENTON  
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Some performers with the Twilight Repertory Company giggled during a recent rehearsal as they were assigned the roles of prostitute, church lady, drunk and "white bread" couple.

The idea of these characters bumping into each other on a Charlotte street may be far-fetched.

But for a place like New Orleans, in its golden days, the stereotypical characters fit.

"In a sense, New Orleans as it was has died. That's what we're recognizing," James Vesce, troupe director

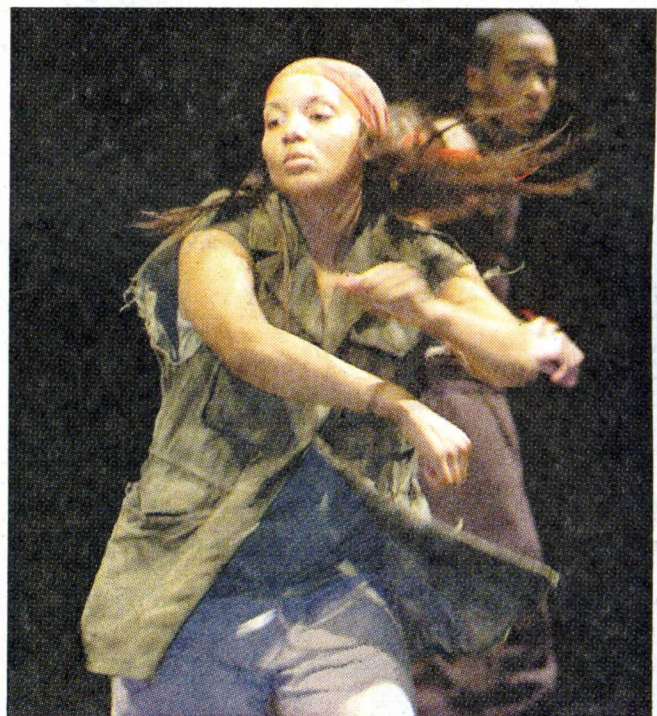
and UNC Charlotte assistant professor, tells his cast of students and alumni.

The group of 11 dancers, musicians and actors will perform Vesce's "Requiem for New Orleans: A Hip-Hop Eulogy" at the 10th annual New York Fringe International Fringe Festival Aug. 14-20. "Requiem" also will be performed at UNCC on Tuesday to help the group raise money for the trip.

The story's dance, words and music cover New Orleans before, during and after Hurricane Katrina.

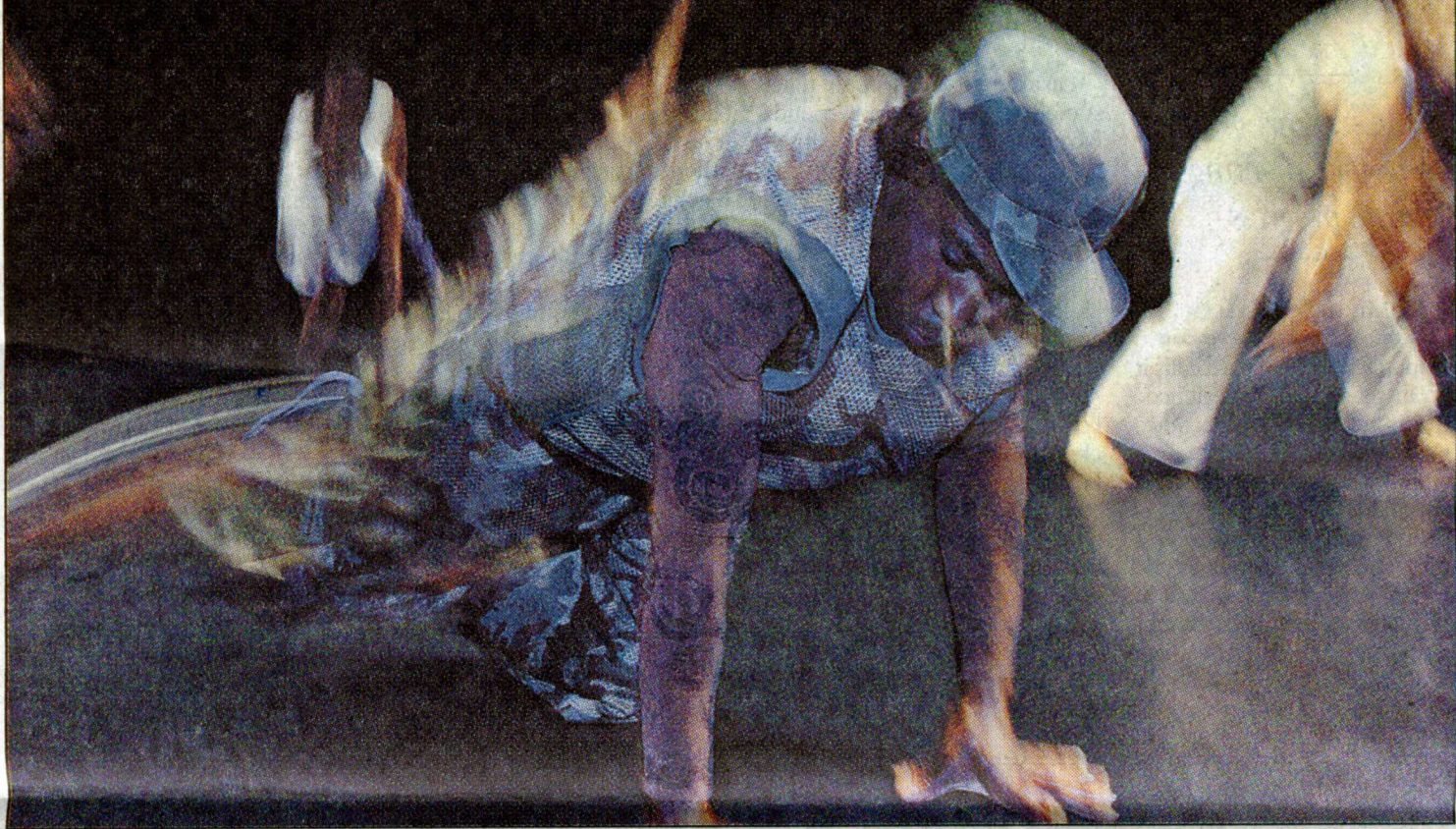
Twilight first performed the piece in December as a

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Jennifer Roberts and Darryl Colson practice during a dress rehearsal Thursday.





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Joseph Kotay of the Twilight Repertory Company performs during dress rehearsal Thursday. The group performs Tuesday in Charlotte before heading to New York for the International Fringe Festival.

# Life in Big Easy is chronicled

## Twilight *from 1J*

fundraiser for people displaced last August by Hurricane Katrina. The show raised about \$1,200 for the Salvation Army's relief efforts.

The musical uses a funeral mass motif to represent how the storm affected the city.

But however dark the topic, "Requiem" is also fun and modern for its performers - and perhaps the audience.

The show's student and alumni performers come from backgrounds in jazz, tap, modern, hip-hop and break dance. Their moves are put against the loud, recorded brass tones of New Orleans jazz and newer beats spit out by a DJ on stage.

"Requiem" has only four members from its original cast that performed the piece last year, so some were having to learn the moves from scratch.

UNCC student Darryl White, 18, had to watch his fellow dancers to make sure he was picking up the right steps. White also

## Want To Go?

**What:** "Requiem for New Orleans," a hip-hop musical.

**When:** 8 p.m. Tuesday.

**Cost:** \$10.

**Where:** Robinson Hall for the Performing Arts Center, UNC Charlotte, 9201 University City Blvd. Parking in East Deck; \$3-5.

**Details:** 704-687-2599, [www.twilightrep.com](http://www.twilightrep.com), [www.fringenyc.org](http://www.fringenyc.org).

watched them to follow the beat, because he has a hearing problem that prevents him from catching all the music.

Boris Rogers, 30, another new addition, is the lead character: the MC, or the rapper who narrates to the audience. Rogers, also a student at UNCC, is known around Charlotte for his slam poetry.

And music majors such as Krystal Pegram, 21, and Caroline Clifton, 20, were added to the mix.

Clifton, who studies voice, will sing 20th-century classical numbers throughout "Requiem." She said she has no problem sitting off stage while the dancers rehearse their parts.

"It's a fun atmosphere. You never know what to expect," she said.

Twilight is a racially diverse troupe.

"A lot of the work we do is multicultural," Vesce said. "Many of our people are of color and not of color ... it's an important ingredient."

The combination of dance and culture enhances the experience, said dancer Jonathan Gross, 20. He has experience in hip-hop and is glad to be applying his talent toward a message.

"This shows that hip-hop can be used in a positive way," Gross said. "It's not just for booty shaking."

The performers said "Requi-

em" honors the people of New Orleans.

"It's not in the main news anymore, but people are still suffering," said dancer Harvey Speller, 22.

A projection behind the performers will flash images showing the damage to the city and its people.

Twilight serves as a way to get the university represented at the Fringe festival, which features about 200 productions from various performing arts companies. This will be Twilight's second trip to Fringe. The first, in 2004, featured another dance and theater piece based on the "Simple" stories by Langston Hughes.

Charlotteans can see "Requiem" for its second local run Tuesday as part of the group's fundraiser for the trip. Vesce said at least 10 percent of the proceeds will be donated to a nonprofit to help Hurricane Katrina victims.

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