

Praize Productions Prepares For Annual Theatrical Performance

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Reesie Davis (pictured) is the founder of Praize Productions, a south side nonprofit that specializes in arts education, and is currently preparing for their yearly theatrical production. Photo Credit: Vanessa Abron

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BY KATHERINE NEWMAN

A local nonprofit arts enrichment organization, Praize Productions, Inc., is currently preparing for their 8th annual theatrical performance.

This year's program, *Smells Like Freedom*, will take viewers on a spiritual journey to both explore and refine their definition of freedom through dance, music, visual arts, and spoken word.

The program will take place at the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts, 915 E 60th St. in Hyde Park, on March 23 at 7 p.m. and tickets are available online at praiseproductions.com.

"With this show, I was trying to put freedom into a tangible form and figure out what it looks like and what it feels like. What I discovered was that freedom is different for everyone and it's different at each stage of our individual lives," said Reesie Davis, founder of Praise Productions.

"I love our shows because they are not just dancing. We are dance heavy, but we infuse visual arts, a live band, spoken word, singing, and I feel like there is always something that everyone can connect to and the messaging is so relevant."

While focused on arts enrichment, Praise Productions, Inc., is infused with education and social programming and reaches out to all kinds of people. Students who participate in their programming receive professional dance training at affordable rates in addition to mentorship and professional performance opportunities, according to their website.

Celebrating eight years of operation this past December, Davis said each year, Praise Productions puts on "big theatrical productions" that transform into "fabulous shows."

There are three core platforms of Praise Productions. The first platform is the Performing Arts Academy which is simply a traditional dance school where young people learn about dance and are exposed to other forms of performance art.

The second platform is the outreach program where Praise Productions is able to partner with Chicago Public Schools and other community organizations to provide supplemental arts programming.

Finally, there is a professional dance company that has both a youth division and an adult division. Dancers in the professional company travel around the city and nationwide for performances.

"I started Praise Productions when I was 25 years old. I was a school teacher for five years, but I always knew I wanted to pursue my passion for dance so I took a leap of faith after my fifth year teaching and dove into my passion whole heartedly and started Praise Productions.

"Now we are eight years in and that is a blessing. Even though we service over 500 youth and adults each year, we still have that kind of grassroots and family feel where we work really close with our students and incorporate both mentorship and education in the arts," said Davis.

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