thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation

thINKingDANCE Receives Project Stream Grant to Engage Young Writers

by Carolyn Merritt

thINKingDANCE has been awarded a Project Stream Grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts for our new Engaging Young Writers initiative. We will implement the program in partnership with the El Futuro branch of the acclaimed Philadelphia Mighty Writers, a non-profit organization that provides writing workshops and education to youth ages 7-17. Engaging Young Writers is modeled after our successful Write Back Atcha program, an interactive post-performance writing series facilitated by tD staff.

TD will offer workshops where Mighty Writers youth will dance in guided movement lessons and then reflect on and write about their experiences. The El Futuro branch of Mighty Writers serves a bilingual group of students, mainly Mexican immigrants, who write in both English and Spanish, but may have little exposure to dance or dance writing. Local dance professional Guillermo Ortega Tanus, a Mexican national who is fluent in Spanish, will lead the movement exercises and offer translation as needed to tD facilitators and students. The dance portion of the workshops will allow students to experiment with new ways of moving and being in their bodies. They will then explore their thoughts about those experiences through critical writing and discussion centered on how we think through our bodies and create meaning in movement.

Engaging Young Writers is an extension of tD's public humanities programming aimed at cultivating better public critical response to dance as an art form. By focusing on youth, we aim to foster the future of dance performers, audiences, and writers in a city where arts programming, especially dance, is scarce to non-existent in many public schools. More generally, we want to encourage a healthy relationship to the body by providing young people the space and language to talk about their bodies and how they live and move in them.

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