

Donald Byrd/the group to perform JazzTrain Oct. 4 at UCSD

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Donald Byrd/The Group will bring what the Durham (N.C.) News and Observer calls "fleet-of-foot, hip-swiveling, never-stop-to-take-a-breath choreography" to San Diego when it performs JazzTrain at 8 p.m. Oct. 4 in Mandeville Auditorium at the University of California, San Diego.

"Byrd's dances have the backbone of ballet and the steely sexiness of jazz," the News and Observer continues. "They're laced with vernacular African-American movements and shaped by the architecture of modern dance."

The Oct. 4 performance of JazzTrain is sponsored by the UCSD University Events Office.

To create JazzTrain, choreographer Byrd collaborated with jazz composers Max Roach, Vernon Reid and Geri Allen. The result is a theatrical fusion which illuminates the African- American roots of jazz and its impact on American popular culture.

"I want JazzTrain to be like Balanchine's Stravinsky and Ravel Festivals at City Ballet," Byrd says, "going beyond the preconceptions of jazz, extending and experimenting with its range as an art form."

Byrd calls jazz "uniquely, undeniably American, a blend of European with African- American traditions ... a reflection of who we are, the diversity of our culture and our uncanny ability to assimilate and transform all kinds of sources into making something new."

Byrd reflects such diversity in his JazzTrain presentation with three 20-minute sections, each one highlighting an individual composer's artistic personality and contributions to jazz techniques. Each section illustrates the use of a particular instrument: drum, guitar and piano.

To this range of music, Byrd choreographs his dances. As the New York Times writes: "Donald Byrd's figures appear and vanish magically. Bits of gymnastics and ballet poke up through the rich texture, with sculptural configurations of lifts and flip-overs."

Since 1976, Byrd has created more than 80 works, frequently collaborating with artists in other fields. His choreographic resume includes work for the La Jolla Playhouse, as well as such companies as the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, the Atlanta Ballet, Boston Ballet II, Compagnie International de Danse of Paris, and the Phoenix Dance Company of Leeds, England.

Byrd started Donald Bryd/The Group in Los Angeles in 1978, moving it to New York in 1983. Since its inception, the mission of the company has been the creation and presentation of work which reaches the

broadest possible segment of society while reflecting the African- American experience and exploring new artistic boundaries.

The company employs 12 dancers in a 40-week season which includes a home season, an annual European tour, and tours of the East and West Coasts, the South and the Midwest.

Byrd is currently an associate-artist at the Yale School of Drama. He began the process of creating JazzTrain in 1997 and continued until its world premiere tour this summer.

"The ideal audience for JazzTrain," says Byrd, "would know something about jazz, but come away with a new definition of its place, power and importance in our culture. They should actually be able to hear the music differently because of the choreography."

Tickets for JazzTrain are \$20 general admission, \$17 for faculty, staff and senior citizens, and \$15 for students. Tickets are available at the UCSD Box Office, 534-8497, and at Ticketmaster outlets at 220-8497. For information on the entire season of events sponsored by the University Events Office, visit the website, <http://ueo.ucsd.edu>, or call the UCSD University Events Office at 534-4090.

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