

DEDICATED

By Richard Schultz

Performer says EPIK Company is his dance "home"

to

DANCE

"T

o live is to dance ... and to dance is to live," according to Randy Gille, a member of the EPIK Dance Company for the past two years.

Gille will put the words into practice when he appears with the company in EPIK's production of *Common Ground* Feb. 17-19 at the Herberger Theater Center in Phoenix.

"This show is a terrific way for audiences to experience many different forms of dance, including contemporary, jazz, hip hop and break dancing," said Gille, a junior majoring in dance at Arizona State University.

The company's 16 dancers will perform original choreography to music by contemporary artists, such as Usher and Daft Punk! The performance also will include guest appearances by ASU Hip Hop Coalition, Furious Styles Crew, Neo Phon 'Elix and Silo Dance Company.

Gille contributed original choreography to a dance titled "The L Word," which follows two couples through sections titled "Lost," "Lust," and "Love."

He said he's also looking forward to playing a nerd in a number titled "Special Girl," where EPIK's artistic co-director Luis "Weezy" Egurrola plays a maternal role.

It was Egurrola who encouraged Gille to audition for EPIK, which Egurrola founded in 2007 with Sarah "Saxa" Dimmick. Gille had earlier won spots on the Phoenix Mercury Hip-Hop squad and the Phoenix Suns Solar Squad, both coached by Egurrola.

Gille, a Valley native, said he found movement and dance early in life. Since the age of 8, he was inspired by music videos on MTV and would choreograph his own renditions for family and friends.

While attending South Mountain High School, his love of performance deepened when he was part of the cast of school productions of *Seussical* and *Flower Drum Song*. He said acting captivated his attention, but

dance captured his soul.

At ASU, Gille joined Hip Hop Coalition, a student organization that promotes the positive aspects of hip hop culture and dance. As a gay man, he said he responded to the organization's commitment to a safe learning environment for individuals regardless of differences that may divide people, such as race, culture, gender, sexuality, body shape or religion.

Gille said he found a "home" for his dance with EPIK, which strives to uplift and unite with a balance of street and technical dance and the power of music, performance art and community activism.

Since joining the company, he has performed at last year's Phoenix Pride and the Celebration of Dance at the Herberger Theatre. He said he enjoys participating in EPIK's community outreach, including teaching dance to children.

Rachel Hawkinson, EPIK executive director, said Gille is "a perfect representation of what we're all about. Dance isn't one-dimensional anymore, and Randy's a perfect example of that with his versatility. He's as exquisite at modern as he is funny and soulful at hip hop."

Gille, who plans to pursue a professional dance career as a performer after graduation in 2012, said he's also interested in trying out for TV dance shows like *So You Think You Can Dance* or *Live to Dance*. **-E**

VITAL STATISTICS

Common Ground

EPIK Dance Company
7:30 am, Feb. 17 and 18,
2 and 7:30 pm, Feb. 19
Herberger Theater Center
222 E. Monson Phoenix
Tickets: \$20 in advance,
\$25 at the door
www.epikdance.org



Photo courtesy of Chris Benson/Arizona