



IN 2005, the Francesca Harper Project debuted with a sold-out dance performance of *MODO Fusion* at the Alley Theater. In 2006, Francesca Harper released her solo album *MODO Fusion* a collection of soulful R&B and Electronica acclaimed as ground-breaking. Conceptual choreographer, dancer and recording artist Francesca Harper has been called "category defying." A former student of the American Ballet School, the Goffrey School and the Alvin Alley School, Francesca performed principle roles with the Dance Theater of Harlem and William Forsythe's Ballet Frankfurt. On Broadway, Francesca has performed in *Fosse*, *The Producers*, *The Frogs* and currently in *Shogun* in *The Color Purple* musical.

INTERVIEWED BY MICHAEL R. THIERRY



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FRANCESCA HARPER SPREADS MOD FASHION

MOD OH! FUSION

MSM->>> WHAT'S A DANCER'S STYLE?
FRANCESCA "That could be many things. A dancer's style...hmm? Personally, spiritually, I guess a dancer's style is mainly discipline, that's a big part of it. We discipline ourselves to perform physically, artistically, elegance. We seek excellence...commitment these are some of the words I would use and diligence. A dancer wants to reflect these qualities."

MSM->>> THAT SOUNDS LIKE A LOT.
FRANCESCA "Oh, ya, you know, but it's also about surrendering to the art. That's what I love about dance...that it just speaks to the soul, you can really just channel spiritually and just (smiles) Let the Spirit move you!"

MSM->>> HOW?
FRANCESCA "For me it's when you really surrender into that space, the body and spirit combine. That's when transcendence happens, you know? That's when you really fly in an abstract sense. You know what I mean?"

MSM->>> THE CREATION OF "MODO FUSION" THE DANCE, THE COMPANY, THE MUSIC CD, AND ITS CRITICAL ACCLAIM WHAT DOES THAT MEAN TO YOU?
FRANCESCA "MODO Fusion to me is like the foundation. It's a foundation of self-acceptance and being in the moment more so than typical activities. MODO means "Just Now" and Fusion is the merging of different things. So since I sing, dance, act and choreograph and do all that stuff that's the fusion part and the "just now" is really just being present in the moment and my style, I believe, reflects that."

MSM->>> IN WHAT WAY?
FRANCESCA "It's about performance, which is about being in the moment, keeping pace, accepting where you are as your reality and give moment to explore. With MODO Fusion I wanted to develop a real original blend, for dance, for the art form. A blend of dance, theatre and original music I was trying to bring something new to the dance world, that's why MODO is at it's most modern, the next generation."

MSM->>> ISN'T WHAT IS MODERN AN EXTENSION OR EVOLUTION OF WHAT WE'VE EXPERIENCED FROM THE PAST.
FRANCESCA "Yes! Always! Absolutely, I mean it takes my work with Alvin Alley, from the Dance Theatre of Harlem, from the Frankfurt Ballet, my experiences living abroad in Europe and all the different cultures I was exposed to there as well. In my work I'm bringing it back to my personal experiences in my community, the people I grew up with and draw my strength from. My work is also the breadth of the African American Community. In terms of issues that we have to grapple with, from my perspective my first works in concert were about beauty and self-perception and this is also about self-perception. As a black woman I feel that we have many more strikes against us as a community and sometimes we need to be reminded of how beautiful and powerful and strong we really are! (Francesca smiles and laughs) Yeah!"



In this issue **Hot Stepz** brings you a new aesthetic for dancers' fashion. Janeen C. Williams a former buyer for Neiman Marcus and stylist/buyer for Spike Lee, shows us how she has turned a small boutique in Boston MA., into one of the best kept secrets of high fashion Patrick Targete's MOD Boston Boutique!

FRANCESCA HARPER plays the sultry and dynamic Shug Avery on Broadway's *The Color Purple Musical* and looks every inch the part as *Hot Stepz Magazine* Photographer, Rakim Raquib reads the set. Janeen C. Williams describes what makes her Mod Fusion Style so popular. "The key words for the 'Mod Boston' client are detail, creativity, and individuality," Janeen states. "We cater to a woman of all faces models, dancers, business women...There is not one type of woman that we dress. We find it intriguing to help a customer who comes in eager but not necessarily knowing where to start. She is an empty canvas."
 "Our collection is a fusion of the classic, eclectic and funky, because we want our pieces to reflect more than an environment for work or be one strictly for play. These are clothes that will define your wardrobe as uniquely as your own. Our clients come here when they

attending major events and want to make an impression or for special occasions then there are those who come just to find that accessory that makes their wardrobe pop!"
 "We give a look that will make a woman stand out so that when people say, 'WOW! Where did you get that outfit?' The Style will automatically stand out as 'M.O.D.' Metropolitan with an edge, Original in regards to being uniquely creative, and Detail oriented in that we know people come here to be a little more funky, it's definitely a fusion of high end haute couture with the Urban edge."

interviewed by
MICHAEL B. THIERRY

model:
FRANCESCA HARPER
original clothing:
MOD BOSTON
jewelry by:
CELESTINE RAYNE
photographer:
RAKIM RAQUIB

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