

Chamber music meets hip-hop

By Jason Victor Serinus
Special to The Examiner

What is the sound of chamber hip-hop opera? Judging from composer-pianist JooWan Kim's sound clips on his Ensemble Mik Nawooj MySpace page, not at all what you'd expect. Nor is "Great Integration," an "epic chamber hip-hop opera" that melds Kim's music with Raissa Simpson's choreography into an allegory that has definite parallels to the Mayan story of the end of the world.

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Performed by Ensemble Mik Nawooj and Simpson's Push Dance Company, and featuring MC Kirby Dominant and jazz vocalist Christopher Nicholas, "Great Integration," onstage this weekend at ODC Commons, breaks established boundaries between genres and styles. "Great Integration" is my attempt to channel," Kim explained during a conference call with Simpson. "The basic story came through me in cryptic fashion in the BART tunnel while I was riding between San Francisco and Berkeley." Kim, who came to the U.S. from South Korea 12 years ago, first performed the work in Hellman Hall while getting his master's degree at the old San Francisco Conservatory of Music. He then spent a year making an album,

IF YOU GO
Great Integration

Presented by Ensemble Mik Nawooj and Push Dance Company

Where: ODC Commons, 351 Shotwell St., San Francisco
When: 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday
Admission: \$15 to \$25
Contact: (415) 863-9834, or visit www.brownpapertickets.com/event/104653

which led to a three-year contract with the great Ahmed Jamal's record company. Kim eventually met Simpson, who thought the music of "Great Integration" ideal for her Push Dance Company. After the two performed together, they decided to integrate hip-hop, classical, modern technical dancing and other idioms into a multichapter chamber opera with Taoist overtones that tells

the tale of the cosmic shift that will change humanity forever. "I'm translating JooWan's story visually," Simpson says. "Our musicians and dancers will share the stage. I think JooWan approached me because my style is eclectic, and uses aerial dance to invoke the mythological, magical, celestial story line." This weekend's presentation represents the penultimate chapter in Kim's saga. The final chapter, "Celestial King Descending," will be performed in 2011. On the eve of Dec. 21, 2012, the crucial date in Mayan Prophecy, both chapters will be performed together. And what is the tale? According to the press release, the "Black swordsman of dominance is chosen as the one to trigger the great integration of the world before the arrival of celestial king. When all the five lords of material realm are conquered, the old world we know will merge into one and the great celestial king will descend from ninth heaven to wipe out all the impurities of the world, thus creating a new world with brand new paradigm." You've got to be there. I certainly will.

END-OF-WORLDLY COLLABORATION

From left, Jetta Martin, Raissa Simpson, JooWan Kim and Kat Worthington are part of "Great Integration," debuting this week in a presentation from Ensemble Mik Nawooj and Push Dance Company.



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