

Micah Watson
Artist Minigrant Outcome Report

From February 19th to February 21th, I was afforded the opportunity to perform with my dance team, Send Judah First, in Charleston, South Carolina. Send Judah First is the Church of God in Christ's National dance team and is comprised of women from all across the country. Therefore, it is always special when we are able to come together to perform.

On the first evening, we spent intense hours rehearsing for our choreographed number, which was set to the song "Gift From God" by Benita Wilson. This song was chosen as an ode to Mother Willie Mae Rivers, the highest female official in our denomination, whose ninetieth birthday we were celebrating. This dance was unique in that we used boxes filled with monetary gifts as props. I acquired new skills by learning to turn and jump while balancing a box. This was most definitely an exercise in poise.

During this weekend, Send Judah First also participated in Praise & Worship, a time when the congregation is encouraged to join in with the singing at the beginning of the service in order to set the tone for the rest of the event. During these times, we used synchronized improvisation—a leader would be designated whom the rest of the group would follow. The challenge in this is appearing as though we all know exactly what is coming next. We must present ourselves with grace. In spontaneous situations, this becomes difficult. Therefore, every time my dance team comes together, we do exercises to improve this skill. Additionally, as a Pentecostal denomination, services and events are filled with spur-of-the-moment situations. Because of this there were also times when we were called upon to dance during other parts of the service. As such, we remained uniformed and with tambourines in hand during all services. As an indication of the caliber of this event, services were also attended by gospel great Cece Winans and actor and comedian Chris Tucker.

The Miller Arts Scholars Minigrant financed by plane ticket to Charleston as well as two new uniform pieces. Without this grant, I would not have had the opportunity to join together in dance with my sisters of Send Judah First. I appreciate the program's willingness to support both Black and liturgical art. It is fantastic to know that I am not limited creatively. Furthermore, I appreciate the immense support for my creative exploration. Thank you to the Miller Arts Scholars Program for this opportunity.

"Gift From God" Performance:

<https://www.facebook.com/leah.w.davis.9/videos/10205541280953280/>

Spontaneous Tambourine Playing and Dancing:

<https://www.facebook.com/bishopakins/videos/10153487819638108/>



Send Judah First with Christ Tucker



Send Judah First with Cece Winans