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By Shaun Brady

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Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers explores what it means to become an American

The dance company, led by Kun-Yang Lin, is premiering "Home/S. 9th St."



See Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers perform "Home/S. 9th St." Nov. 19-21 at FringeArts.

Frank Bicking Photo

Much of Kun-Yang Lin's work has focused on the restlessness of the immigrant experience. Last year, the Taiwanese-born choreographer premiered "Be/Longing: Light/Shadow," with inspiration roaming from Mexico to Venice, Indonesia to the Jersey Shore.

But Lin has lived in the United States for 14 years and in South Philadelphia since 2008. His new piece, "[Home/S. 9th St.](#)," explores the idea of settling down and the notion of finding a home in a place where immigrants from different cultures have been doing so for generations.

“When immigrants move to a new country, they give up whatever they have,” Lin says. “They have to rebuild themselves and start a new home. That sense of questioning becomes an important element to tap into what it means to be a human being. This piece is about that sense of a microcosm, where we can learn so much about ourselves and what it means to be American for all those immigrants.”

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Lin was attracted to the diversity of the South Ninth Street corridor when he was searching for new headquarters for his [Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers](#) company in 2008. Alongside the Italian Market Lin found pockets of Asian, Latino, Irish and Jewish immigrants co-existing, sometimes uneasily. “My own experience was the sense of diversity, the colors, the smells,” he recalls. “I’ve seen it changing just from when I first moved there, at one point broken down and then revitalized. It’s like life in how it goes up and down. You could say that about every place, but it’s such a vivid experience on Ninth Street because you get the sense of embracing old and new and in between.”

To create “Home/S. 9th St.,” Lin and his dancers — many of them foreign-born — conducted story circles with their neighbors, and drew on what they learned for the creation of the dance. Not everyone was comfortable sharing in that way; Lin recalls pursuing some of his neighbors to places where they felt more at home. “People may feel more comfortable talking in the park, a senior center, the Italian Market or one of the two big Asian shopping malls, or one particular breakfast place where they go every day,” he says. “I had to spend maybe five breakfasts with one single older Italian in order for them to feel comfortable to share their experiences with me.”

In the news

With the thundering of endless presidential debates on TV, the issue of immigration is particularly timely. Lin insists that he didn’t set out to make a statement, but admits that one inevitably arises.

“I’m an artist, not a politician. But this piece is about right now while embracing our memories and perspectives,” he says. “It’s not primarily focused on a political point of view, but that becomes part of the piece because that’s what we’re dealing with as a society.”

If you go

Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers: ‘Home/S. 9th St.’

Nov. 19-21

FringeArts, 140 N. Columbus Blvd.

\$15-\$29, 215-413-1318

Fringearts.com

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