

'Athletes that are artists' | Memphis dance collective hosts national intensive

[24 localmemphis.com/article/news/community/athletes-artists-memphis-dance-collective-hosts-national-intensive-ballet-tap-ballerina-art-movement-binghampton-collage-summer-raise-bar-2022-program/522-f0ba0ab2-4ac5-47e9-9545-5459cdc8b950](https://localmemphis.com/article/news/community/athletes-artists-memphis-dance-collective-hosts-national-intensive-ballet-tap-ballerina-art-movement-binghampton-collage-summer-raise-bar-2022-program/522-f0ba0ab2-4ac5-47e9-9545-5459cdc8b950)

Community

The 2022 "Raise The Bar Summer Intensive" at Collage Dance is underway, "nurturing budding dancers" from across the country by offering classes in Memphis.

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MEMPHIS, Tenn — Seeing is believing, and right now, kids from all around the country are in Memphis learning to believe that they too can make it in the world of dance.

The 2022 "Raise The Bar Summer Intensive" at Collage Dance is underway, "nurturing budding dancers" from across the country by offering classes on Tillman Street in Binghampton.

Kevin Thomas is the Founding Artistic Director of Collage Dance Collective. He said that "something is happening," here in the city.

"It's exciting to see all these kids that want to come to Memphis," he said. "They don't live here. They want to come here and train with us."

Thomas said that the collective's summer intensive is "pretty intense." Students learn not only ballet, but also jazz, flamenco and modern forms of dance.

"Dance is a sport," he said. You are an athlete that is an artist."

Collage was founded in 2009 with the mission of serving the black population in Memphis. Brandye Lee is a "Raise The Bar Summer Intensive" faculty member.

"Collage is a beautiful place," she said "Everyone belongs. If you walk through these doors, everyone belongs here."

Lee is a retired professional ballerina who has been dancing her entire life.

"For me to now be in a position where I can be a role model to my students is so gratifying," she said. "It's also very important because to see is to believe. When you see someone who looks like you, doing some thing that you dream of doing, it absolutely gives you permission that you can also do this thing.

Someone who has taken this message to heart is 19-year-old Collage Dance Collective student Libiya Gray. She said she has trained at Collage for 10 years.

This past year she finished her freshman year at SUNY Purchase College in the state of New York in their Conservatory of dance.

"I want to defeat the odds and do what people don't think I could do," she said. "[Collage] said 'No matter what you look like, no matter whether you are short, or big or little, or black or white—it's possible ... We are growing and we're getting more color into the ballet world.' I feel like I took that, and I ran with it."

Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/I8oNBnuiwfg>