



Will Power's solo tour de force *The Gathering* also deals with the struggles of black men in America and the connections they share. The title refers to settings where black men gather: the barbershop, the jazz club, the basketball court and the street corner, and the work consists of four related pieces on these themes. (The latter three were performed at the festival.) *The Gathering* succeeds largely because of Power's fine-tuned aesthetic through-line and compelling performance. Onstage, keyboardist Mohammed Bilal provides music, beats and sound effects that propel Power's vision.

The best of the segments is a brilliant basketball piece that ends the show. B-ball is, of course, the quintessential hip-hop sport, as evidenced by lore ranging from rapper Kurtis Blow's 1984 single paying homage to the sport, to rapper KRS-1's more recent proclamation in a Nike ad that "The revolution is basketball." Power enacts a five-man, seven-point game, moving seamlessly between characters defined by distinctive choreographed movements and different lyrical deliveries. His performance packs all the intensity of an NBA playoff game, and the audience in Winston-Salem rises to its feet, cheering wildly as the last shot sails into the imaginary hoop.

Twenty years ago, critics said that hip-hop was a fad. Not only have they been proven wrong, but in many senses, hip-hop is today what rock-and-roll was in the '50s—the dominant music of youth culture worldwide. From commercials, film, fashion and television to MTV and mainstream radio, the pervasive presence of hip-hop cannot be denied. During the festival, Psalmayene 24 and a local hip-hop aficionado studying set design discussed the possibilities for a total hip-hop theatre. In their vision, every element from lighting, set and sound design, to playwriting, directing and acting would be created by artists forged in the streetwise crucible of hip-hop culture. Judging by the success of the hip-hop plays in Winston-Salem, that day may not be far off. **AT**

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