

# ThisWeek

## COMMUNITY NEWS

---

## Xclaim Dance: Civil-rights issues inspired 'Spirituals'

**Monday**

Posted Mar 20, 2017 at 9:05 PM

By **KEVIN PARKS**

THISWEEKNEWS.COM



It's definitely not Dr. Seuss.

For their next show, members of Xclaim Dance, a troupe founded in 2007 and based at the Charisma Centre for the Arts on Karl Road in the Northland area, are taking inspiration from the civil rights movement.

That's a big leap from the last program the dancers put on. The ninth season premier in November was called "Fanciful Danciful." According to Xclaim's website, that show found its muse "in the wacky, whimsical and wise words of Dr. Seuss."

With "Spirituals," which will be performed March 24-26 at Columbus Dance Theater, 529 E. Main St., the dancers are purposely tackling a serious subject, and one that's close to their hearts, according to Mariah Layne French, the company's founder and artistic director.

"We were thinking a lot just about some of the civil rights things that have been going on in our society and politically," French said last week. "A lot of times as artists, as dancers, those frustrations can become a muse, wanting to dance it out."

Performances for "Spirituals," with choreography by French, veteran Xclaim Dance members J. Shannon Filmore and Kevin Bailey, as well as by guest choreographers Daryse Osborne and Frederick Ocansey, are set for 8 p.m. on

March 24, 4 and 8 p.m. on March 25 and 4 p.m. on March 26. Tickets cost \$20 for adults, \$15 for students and senior citizens and \$10 for children 10 and under.

They may be purchased online at [xclaimdance.com/performance.htm](http://xclaimdance.com/performance.htm). In addition, the box office at the theater will open 45 minutes prior to the shows.

No single incident in recent years provided the spark that led to "Spirituals," according to French. It's a culmination of a lot of things, she said, "and I guess, to an extent, the political voices speaking out against people who are different."

"The way we are going about it is we are taking different perspectives throughout history and addressing the turmoil people felt," she said.

"It's more focused on social incidents that are going on today," said Brandia Hayes of Reynoldsburg, in her first year with Xclaim Dance "It's been primarily about bringing people together and uniting us through our humanity."

"I guess I hope there's something everyone can connect with, no matter what background they come from socially, spiritually, racially," said Mary Negley of Lewis Center, an Xclaim dance member since 2010.

"It's about each of us and our path, but it's also about community," French said.

"There's not necessarily one message, but an underlying tone," veteran dancer and choreographer Filmore of the Easton area said. "We're kind of saying different things in different pieces. It's about diversity, the different feelings and conflicts that we deal with.

"We don't have to agree, but we can still coexist."

"All of the movement in the entire show hints of African diaspora," according to French.

The finale for the show, she added, is called "Begin Again."

"It is literally about going back to the beginning of where hatred may have started and trying to make it different," French said.

**[kparks@thisweeknews.com](mailto:kparks@thisweeknews.com)**

---