

MFA student explores black womanhood in upcoming performance

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Miriam Taylor newwave@tulane.edu



Antebellum, the main character in the 16-person cast of 'Watermelon Dreams' is played by Tulane MFA student Jarrell Hamilton, who is seen floating atop a sea of watermelons as a representation of her inner spirit. (Photo by Diogo De Lima)

Jarrell Hamilton, an MFA student in the Tulane University Department of Theatre and Dance, is telling the story of black womanhood and the intricate vulnerabilities and strengths that come with that identity.

Her performance, *Episodes*, is the second component of an art installation, *Watermelon Dreams*, on the same subject that will be presented Saturday, Dec. 2, from noon to 3 p.m. at the Newcomb Art Museum on the uptown campus. The art installation will have a second opening at the Contemporary Arts Center of New Orleans on Dec. 16 from 1 to 4 p.m.

Episodes offers a combination of dance and theater featuring atypical depictions of black womanhood from African-American ancestry to single motherhood. It will be performed in room 300 of McWilliams Hall on Jan. 24-27 at 8 p.m. and Jan. 28 at 2 p.m.

For Hamilton, a native of New Orleans and two-time Big Easy Classical Arts Award winner, *Episodes* is her first full-length choreographic work and delves into narratives of single

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motherhood, identity, collective histories and the ancestral memories of black women. Hamilton said that she drew inspiration from the works of African-American female authors, Neo-soul artists and W.E.B. Dubois' concept of "double consciousness."

Additional inspiration in telling the story, she said, comes from the Yoruba Orisha deities and the art of the Egun Egun masking tradition.

The performance is produced by the Tulane University Department of Theatre and Dance.

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