

Dance

Dance as Language

TU Dance artistic directors Toni Pierce-Sands and Uri Sands don't want anything lost in translation.

By Lightsey Darst

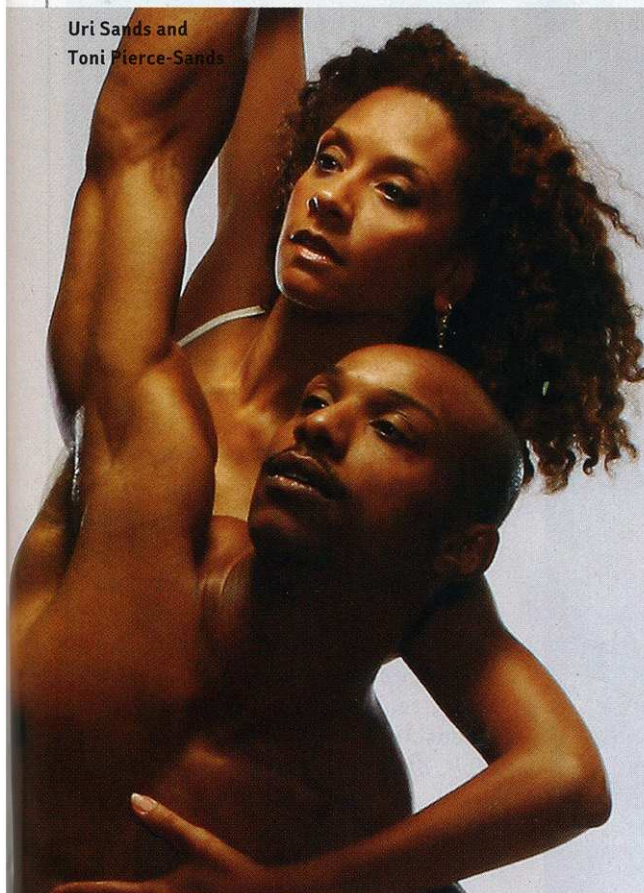
TU Dance presents its fourth full-length Minneapolis performance this month. With Uri Sands's vivid, luscious dances—think ballet lines in modern-dance pieces with hip-hop flair—the first three performances of this contemporary dance company played to full houses, standing ovations, and critical acclaim. Under the codirection of Sands and his wife, Toni Pierce-Sands, the company has quickly become a respected troupe on the Twin Cities dance scene. This month's performance will feature new dances by Sands—including a work about urban life and a work concerned with travel and pilgrimage, originally inspired by Bedouin culture—but will also show New York choreographer

Ron K. Brown's recent piece for Pierce-Sands. The duo took some time recently to talk about how they see dance.

Sands and Pierce-Sands agree there's no one thing to "get" from a dance performance. "That's like looking for the manual for life," Sands says. Instead, they emphasize the variety of experiences people can have. But they don't mean to leave the audience on their own to decipher dances. Both are former Alvin Ailey company dancers and recall Ailey's idea that "dance came from the people." They aim to create dances that resonate with you, whomever you are, which is why they're committed to diversity. That diversity is not just of color, but also of movement; you'll see sharp, fast dancers alongside electric, loose dancers, such as Jerome Barnes. "The audience needs to feel like they're represented," says Pierce-Sands. "Ultimately, [the audience] can see themselves. That's great dance."

This connection is important to Pierce-Sands and Sands. Dance is more than physical excellence in space. For the audience, "it's being able to understand the language," Pierce-Sands says. **June 15–18, 22–25.** Southern Theater, 1420 Washington Ave. S., Mpls., 612-340-1725, southerntheater.org, tudance.org

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Uri Sands and
Toni Pierce-Sands

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