



## Zab Maboungou's trek through the heart

BY JANET FRENCH

Combining her incredible experience in African, European and American dance, Zab Maboungou has created an amazing blend of rhythm and movement in her latest creation, *Incantation*. Maboungou has taken traditional dance, inherent from growing up in Congo, and created her own unique style.

The most overwhelming element of the performance was the agility and concentration required to execute traditional African dance. Although technically outstanding, it was quite clear that this performance was not merely some demonstration of Maboungou's amazing ability, but was spirituality expressed by movement to rhythm.

The simplicity of the settings were ideal for focusing on the movements and the motives they came from. Minimal lighting was used and Maboungou danced on a near-empty stage to the extraordinary drumming of Paul Miller and Dominic Donkor.

The pace of the dancing started off slowly and eventually worked up to lively gestures, then progressed to some rather impressive quick and sharp movements that were almost erratic in nature.

Although the originality and creativity of the movements themselves were phenomenal, there was a great degree of repetition in the repertoire. However, this repetition is likely choreographed to reinforce the

importance of the rhythm.

The amount of grace and agility required to execute traditional Congo dance proved to be quite amazing. The technique itself is based on stability, and by using bent knees and flexed feet, Maboungou performed the moves with a type of grace that ballerinas just don't achieve.

Maboungou's choreography was strong, fluid and passionate. It seemed as though the rhythm of the drums were radiating out from inside of her rather than from the percussionists. Maboungou claims that rhythm is the fundamental basis of her work, and she also insists that rhythm is what both the dancers and the musicians must answer to when creating a piece.

Despite the overwhelmingly traditional element of the show, there were overtones of contemporary dance present in her choreography, and this combination proved to be a fascinating one.

The most enlightening element of the production proved to be the session after the show when Maboungou addressed the crowd for questions and comments. In addition to being a choreographer, she is a writer, composer and philosophy professor. Maboungou relayed to the audience how her art form is not just artistic release, but how she explores what she does not understand.

"In Africa, dance is not just a form of entertainment, [but more] a way of finding self," said Maboungou.

Other issues of interest that she addressed in the forum included the importance of improvisation and the idea that all people are equal in regards to rhythm and time, regardless of their ability.

Overall, *Incantation* proved to be a highly educational experience. It was refreshing to experience Maboungou's individual blend of choreography, which was both technically and emotionally phenomenal. The post-show discussion added to the understanding of the performance greatly. It should be a mandatory part of all her shows. Yet, even regarding the dancing alone, Zab Maboungou's creation was an intriguing adventure for the mind and heart.

## Ember Swift 'a real treat'

BY JANET FRENCH

Ember Swift proved to be an absolute delight live, as she debuted in Halifax at Reflections Cabaret last Thursday night. Though her latest CD, *Insectinside*, is an impressive and diverse collection, Swift is a real treat in concert.

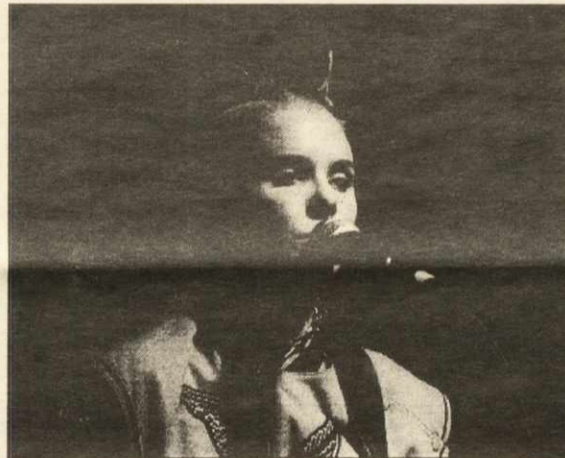
Swift performed an energetic set of songs, ranging from ballads, politically-tinged melodies and rockin' tunes; all which kept her audience entertained for a good two hours. Her exuberance and casual chatting with the crowd made the atmosphere very relaxed, enjoyable and interactive, not like some concerts where the performers hide in the dressing room and dash through the crowds like they are deities.

The turnout wasn't overwhelming,

but was reasonable for Swift's inaugural show east of Quebec. Also, the crowd seemed quite responsive to her repertoire.

Swift's band was excellent, for on top of being highly talented individuals, it was obvious that they shared her enthusiasm for music.

Ember Swift is an entertainer who certainly warms up a crowd with her irradiating personality and amazing songs that take on a personal meaning for every listener. Next time



Ember Swift warms up the crowd at Reflections. Photo by Lisa Verge

(and there better be a next time) she comes to town, be sure to take in an evening of live musical entertainment at its best with the brute honesty of Ember Swift.

## One day for Remembrance?

BY PHIL LEWIS

This time every year we are all reminded about the horrors of war and the valiant people who fought for our freedom. Although Remembrance Day has come and gone, you may want to give yourself about an hour and visit The Multicultural Arts Resource Centre on Barrington St. The centre is currently showing *Room for Remembrance: Meditations on War*, paintings by Robert Dietz. This is a collection of works using various mediums such as charcoal, pastels, poems, poster paint, and even *papier maché*.

Robert Dietz is a native of Germany who came to Canada at the age of 27 in 1951. He became involved with the Halifax Symphony and was the driving force of the Atlantic Symphony. For eight years Dietz was the Director of SMU's Art Gallery. He later owned and operated Dresden Galleries until his retirement in 1990. The exhibit, which was expected

to fill one room, was forced out into the hall and office space due to the small size of the room available. On the other hand, the Multicultural Centre was able to use the limited space relatively well by arranging the pieces in chronological order (beginning at the door) and ultimately leading to the main room.

The hallway holds his poems and works depicting the families of soldiers, and the room houses the works in which the soldiers are showcased. The room itself is small, but offers a good atmosphere to the mood of the work. To get the audience further into the artist's frame of mind, the centre plays classical music. However, when you walk out of the room to view the rest of the exhibit, the office is playing C100, which completely defeats the purpose.

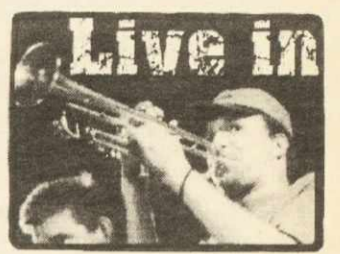
While some of the works appear somewhat simple in design, they are able to evoke a number of emotions that draw the audience into the history of war. One work made of *papier maché* appears to be just a rough flat plane of bright red, yellow, and orange. However, when your

eye wanders down to the title "Burning the Corpses", you are filled with shock and disgust.

Dietz is also very effective in portraying the emotion in the faces of the people in his works. In the pieces "Gold Help Me!" and "Fleeing Mother with Children", the utter desperation of the victims is transferred to the audience with eerie effectiveness.

The focal piece of the exhibit, entitled "It is Enough", was created using oil on masonite and illustrates what seems to be a battered soldier (or Christ) on a cross with a look of sorrow as he gazes upon the hills littered with dead bodies. All of the works are for artist and the profits go entirely to the artist.

It is hard to understand what war is in a time when the only war our generation became actively involved in was narrated by the "Scud Stud". The exhibit is not going to leave you with a warm fuzzy feeling, but it will help you discover what the war veterans went through to protect our freedom.



## Halifax

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 9:00PM: THE BIKE SHOP

This popular Gottingen Street venue is hosting Nova Scotia's favourite neo-hippie, **Bob Snider**, for one night only. Snider's quirky and insightful style has given him a loyal following.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 10:00PM: THE GRAWOOD

The **Barstool Prophets** perform with **Lindy** as the last act of the Belvedere Rocks concert series. The series has always promoted up-and-coming arena rock sensations, and this time will be no exception.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 9:00PM: MARKET ST. JAZZ CAFE

The **Ruins** bring their act to Halifax. This revered Japanese jazz duo can be described only as strange, but there is a method to their madness.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22: KING'S COLLEGE SEMI-FORMAL

Dress swanky, pull up in a BMW, bring a big, fat wallet, and smoke a smooth Cuban cigar. Funny, I don't think that **Big City Blues** will adhere to this societal code as they entertain Halifax's elite. Well, maybe the cigar.

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