



ROSETTA BROOKS

Capitol Hill is truly Rosetta Brooks's neighborhood. She grew up here, as did her mother; she went to local public schools (to Giddings Elementary in the building that is now Results, the Gym, and to Hine Junior High); and she still goes to the church her grandparents and parents attended – Ebenezer United Methodist on Fourth Street Southeast. In the rioting that followed Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, she watched as the H Street Northeast shoe store managed by her fiancé went up in flames; she got married a month later in her minister's Capitol Hill living room and the wedding dinner was at her parents' home on 6th Street. Rosie no longer lives on the Hill but she has been an inspiration to legions of Capitol Hill youngsters and adults in her forty plus years at the St. Mark's Dance Studio.

Since she was a small child dance has been Rosie's passion. She was born with two club feet and the doctor who corrected them surgically suggested to her mother that dance classes would be good for her. She got "good basic training in ballet and tap" at a local studio, danced her way through high school at Dunbar, and went on to study physical education at Howard University. While she was there her high school friend George Faison (who went on to dance with the Alvin Ailey Dance Company and to be a Tony Award winning choreographer) told her that a young semi-professional dance company based at St. Mark's Church needed a quick study to fill in for a dancer who was sick. Rosie got the part and never left St. Mark's, forming a close relationship with the company's founder, Mary Craighill. A series of physical problems from chronic tendonitis to bad knees cut short Rosie's performing career, leaving her more and more to focus her energy on the choreography and teaching which are her great loves.

Since 1965 Rosie has taught everything from beginner ballet through pointe as well as modern and jazz dance to both children and adults. She has created liturgical dances for members of the church (members without much dance training) to offer as part of worship services; and she has choreographed for productions of the St. Mark's Players. After Mary Craighill died in 1999 Rosie became director of the studio. She continues to teach and to direct annual recitals by both children and adults, a semi-professional concert performance by the company and appearances for seniors at nursing homes. She also advises a board that administers a scholarship fund left in memory of Mrs. Craighill. Rosie teaches dance classes at St. Peter's Interparish School, at KIPP-DC Academy and at an after-school program for low-income children at Capitol Hill Methodist church.

Following the advice of her parents, who worried that her dance career could be derailed by injury, Rosie got certification in accounting which she puts to use as office manager at Garden Memorial Presbyterian church in Anacostia.

Rosie's husband, Arthur Brooks, died of a heart attack in 1987, when her children were still in their teens. Antionette Marie Stokes and Joseph Arthur Brooks are now grown and Rosie is the proud grandmother of five year old Joseph Junior whose mother, her daughter-in-law April, performs regularly with the company. She is one of the many students of the St. Mark's Dance Studio who was inspired by Rosetta Brooks.

"Really," she says, "I am doing today what I always wanted to do."