



Waxing Poetic

AFTER COMPETING ON AN INTERNATIONAL LEVEL, A POMPAÑO BEACH SPOKEN-WORD ARTIST CREATES A PROGRAM FOR YOUTH

BY ALYSSA FISHER

Art is Sharondra Richardson's icebreaker. Creating keeps her balanced. Writing is her pipeline to communication—and she has a lot to say.

In March, the poet—best known by her stage name, Eccentric—took her stories to Dallas, where she competed in the international Women of the World Poetry Slam. She placed 14th out of 96 poets representing six countries.

"I had been going through a lot of transitions in my personal life, a lot of struggles," the Pompano Beach resident says. "At the time, I needed the change of scenery. Dallas was great—I accomplished what I set to accomplish. And, it was healing, honestly."

On the stage, alone in front of five judges, Eccentric, 31, opened up about her husband's suicide, a miscarriage, raising her son in what she calls a police state, and her brother, who is a former Marine.

"I call it glass-house poetry," she says. "It's just people staring through all the glass windows you have to your soul."

The experience inspired her to launch

Made in Pompano, a program designed to nurture and showcase young spoken-word artists. On Saturdays at Magnetic Pompano, a movable space in Suite C104 at Pompano Citi Centre, children 12 to 18 prepare to compete next year in Brave New Voices, a national competition that Eccentric calls the "mecca of youth poetry." The program is open to South Florida residents for \$45 and those in Pompano Beach for \$30. In addition to reciting poetry, the kids learn about the cultural arts as a business, such as how to host and run competitions, better known as slams. Throughout, they become "better writers, better people, better listeners, better communicators," she says.

"I feel like, if we communicate our feelings and thoughts better, we wouldn't react so negatively," she says.

Eccentric has been writing since childhood but was introduced to spoken-word poetry as a pharmacy student at the University of Florida in 2004. A fellow poet in the Black Student Union saw something eccentric in her that she didn't yet see herself, bestowing the stage name she still uses today.

After graduating in 2008, she worked as a pharmacist for about four years, even as "the walls started to feel like coffins," she says. There was no time to write, no opportunity to express her creativity. Everything changed in 2013, she says, when her husband killed himself. "It's not worth it to be unhappy anymore," she recalls thinking.

Now, Eccentric is a full-time creative. Along with Made in Pompano, the mother of three recently started a local theater company called Eccentric Displays. She also hosts Jam Sessions, an open-mic night

Best Bets for June

20th Anniversary Exhibit

The Coral Springs Museum of Art is celebrating 20 years with a collection of more than 125 pieces, including some by Keith Haring, Hunt Slonem, Romero Britto, Andres Desjardin and Pablo Cano.

When: June 10–August

Where: 2855 Coral Springs Dr., Coral Springs

International Yoga Day

Get your Zen on with a day of yoga taught by local and national instructors. Come for the morning silent yoga event for charity, the pre-party (where healthy juice will be plentiful) or the main event, which will feature a VinVersion Yoga class, taiko drumming and meditation.

When: June 21, 10 a.m.–10 p.m.

Where: Mizner Park, Boca Raton

Diana Ross

The legendary performer has been gracing audiences with her glamour and powerhouse vocals for the past five decades—and shows no sign of slowing down on her "In the Name of Love Tour."

When: June 24, 8 p.m.

Where: Kravis Center for the Performing Arts, West Palm Beach

John Mellencamp

The singer-songwriter, who's been crooning heartland rock for the last 35 years, is hitting the road on his "Sad Clowns & Hillbillies Tour."

When: June 25, 7 p.m.

Where: Mizner Park Amphitheater

for all art forms—such as poetry, singing, rapping and comedy—at Ali Cultural Arts on the last Thursday of each month.

Eccentric says she hopes these programs help the new wave of poets learn how to best express themselves.

"You have to transform into this alter-ego to get outside your nerves, to get outside your head and to get outside of worrying if people will understand your poem—or if they'll care," she says. "It's your story, and no one can tell it like you. ... Forget those scores, and applaud that poet."