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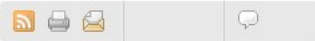
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Germantown poet Ursula Rucker premieres new epic poem

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By Arlene Edmonds
21st Century Media News Service

Germantown >> Ursula Rucker, of Germantown, premiered her epic poem "My Father's Daughter" recently. This was a collaboration with guitarist Tim Motzer. It was a cathartic memoir-type live journal integrating spoken word, poetry, songs and video imagery. It was held at the Prince Theater of the Annenberg Center for Performing Arts in West Philadelphia on Friday, Feb. 6, and Saturday, Feb. 7.

For Rucker, who grew up in Mount Airy attending the old Cecilian Academy, this marked a pivotal turning point in her career. While she has traveled throughout the country and abroad with her work and even worked with The Roots, Silent Poet, Josh Wink and King Britt, this was different. It was something that she had worked on for two decades, and though it was her story, it also involved airing her family of origin's dirty laundry.

As a precursor to the Annenberg performance, Rucker delivered portions of her epic poem at her home church, St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church of Germantown, 109 E. Price St., on Sunday, Feb. 1. After the morning Mass, all were invited to the fellowship hall for refreshments as Rucker opened the Black History Month series.

The artist's mother, Palmina Rucker, of Mount Airy, recalled how the title of the epic poem came about. It was during a heated moment in their household that her late husband reminded Ursula Rucker that "she was her father's daughter," according to Palmina Rucker, a member of the St. Therese Church in the Holy Cross community.

"I am very proud of Ursula's courage in doing this work," Palmina Rucker said. "So many people don't get to do what they love and express what they want to say. This is what she's always wanted to do. This is her story. I just praise God that she did this at her church, and I hope that God will always have a hand in whatever she does."



Ursula Rucker, of Germantown, debuted her epic poem "My Father's Daughter" at the Annenberg Center recently.

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The Rev. Sy Peterka, pastor of St. Vincent's, called Ursula Rucker "one of the treasures in our own backyard." Peterka came to the parish last year after serving at a congregation in Baltimore. He was a frequent guest preacher at the Shrine of the Miraculous Medal in Germantown. So when he was planning the church's Black History Month program, many congregants suggested that Ursula Rucker be included.

"I thought her presentation was powerful," Peterka said. "It's amazing that she was able to recite each poem that was more than five minutes long from memory. She did in such a real manner with so much passion and even using song. So many just told me that they were moved by it.

"I am glad she selected the poems from her collection that were related to Black History Month. I didn't realize that she had so much expertise. The crowd just found her to be so refreshing. We were all very touched by the poems and we were just blessed to have her," Peterka said.

Rucker, who is half African American and half Italian, wrote "My Father's Daughter" inspired by telling the story of her parent's interracial marriage and sometimes violent relationship. This is one of her first major works after she made her fifth album, "She Said," more than four years ago. This is a story she openly shared at St. Vincent's in the presence of not only her church family but three of her four sons who were in the audience.

For the artist, performing comes easily. She has taken her work abroad to the Montreal Jazz Festival, the Australian Freedom Festival, Amnesty's global "Stop Violence against Women" and even concerts in Fabrick, Hamburg, in Germany. It was in 2001 she recorded her debut album, "Supa Sister," and then came works like "Silver & Lead" in 2003, "Ma'at Mama" in 2006 and "She Said" in 2010. Since 2009, she has held a teaching residence at the Muhlenberg College. [Continued...](#)

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