

Inspired by Dance

North Portland dance center reaches out

BY DONOVAN M. SMITH
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Performing alongside the likes of Madonna, Celine Dion, and Pink, and in top productions like Color Purple and Cirque du Soleil, Portland dancer Kemba Shannon has certainly racked up her accolades in the dance world. And she says it all stemmed from a world-renowned pop star and his counterparts.

"As a little girl I was captivated by watching Michael Jackson and all the Motown artists, and I always felt for some reason I had some passion for it," Shannon



Kemba Shannon

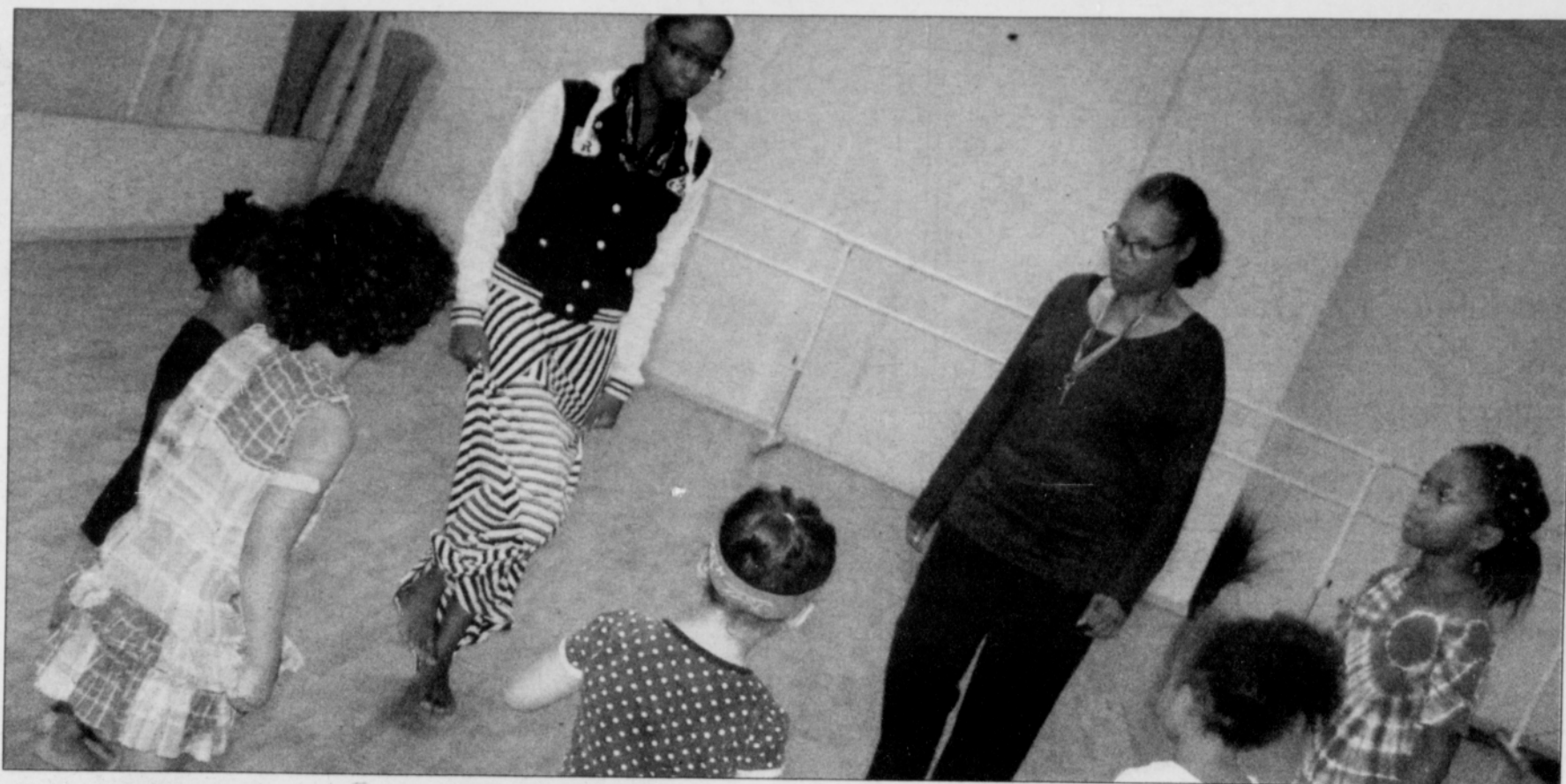
says about her early entry into what would become a professional career.

Her first dance steps came when she joined a group that was headed by an older teacher that she still remembers even to this day. Shannon says Ms. Osmand's ability to choreograph every step to the rhythm of the music was awe inspiring and instilled that passion she experienced when she watched 'The King of Pop.'

Now a dance teacher herself out of a small studio in north Portland, Shannon reflects on those early years as what got her comfortable with dance, "I guess it was really for me, watching my teachers and learning from them."

Shannon says she advanced her skills by taking instructional materials home and practicing dance moves in her room, training away bad habits and perfecting her craft. From there, she found herself creating her own choreography and curriculum in toe with a syllabus to go with it at a very young age.

A Baltimore native, Shannon



Local students get a lesson in dance at the Kemba Shannon Dance Center in north Portland's Kenton neighborhood.

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