

## In the Studio with JaQuel Knight

September 16, 2009

JaQuel Knight, 20, stopped by the Ailey Extension Program on Saturday, September 12 to teach a hip-hop (emphasis on the hip) master class on his way to MTV's Video Music Awards for his winning choreography of Beyonce's "Single Ladies (Put a Ring On It)." With an uncanny sense of musicality, JaQuel led 50 dancers through a dynamic and well-crafted combination to Jay-Z's "On to the Next One" (definitely cleaned up). Throughout class, JaQuel stressed connecting to the music. "In order to become a dancer," he said, "you have to listen and dance to the music." And musicality was certainly the key to his work. "Music is so much more than just lyrics, a bass and a snare."

JaQuel taught with an ease and sense of humor, which often filled the class with laughter. And although he just choreographed the Video of the Year, JaQuel says the biggest challenge he faces as a young teacher is his fear no one will show up. "I'm always nervous for the turnout. I don't teach often, so people don't know who I am. I never know if anyone's coming."

What's on his plate next? "I'm working on a new feature film," JaQuel said so nonchalantly, "with Christina Aguilera and Cher, doing the choreography."

Photo by Jacob Pritchard, courtesy *Dance Spirit*

