

In Loving Memory of



Delores Browne Abelson

MARCH 30, 1935 - OCTOBER 2, 2023

Wake

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2023 FROM 4 P.M. - 8 P.M.

REFLECTIONS

Friends and Family AT 6 P.M.

BENTA'S FUNERAL HOME

630 St. Nicholas Avenue
New York, New York 10030

Interment

FERNWOOD CEMETERY, Wednesday, October 11, 1 P.M.
Landsdowne, PA

In lieu of flowers contributions should be made to:
Dance Theatre of Harlem



Obituary

Delores Browne was a passionate advocate for Black participation in all kinds of dance but particularly ballet and a dance pioneer herself. Ms. Browne studied ballet from her early teens and became a professional dancer, performing ballet and modern dance. She also began her lifetime of teaching shortly after enrolling in a ballet school. She spent decades teaching at the Alvin Ailey School and Philadanco. She was a mentor to generations of young dancers. Ms. Browne also promoted the work of Native American artists through a gallery in New York.

Ms. Browne was born and educated in Philadelphia. In junior high she joined a ballet club and was chosen by Marion Cuyjet to study in the Judimar school where she developed a friendship with Joan Meyers Brown, among others. The high level of instruction in the Judimar school included guest teachers from New York and visits to New York for classes. After she graduated from high school, she spent a year studying at the School of American Ballet in New York.

Ms. Browne began her dance career at the Philadelphia Ballet Guild, where Anthony Tudor made her one of the principal dancers. Then, in 1957, she joined the New York Negro Ballet and participated in its well-received tour of Great Britain. After returning, she danced in concerts with Louis Johnson and Alvin Ailey, among others. She was in the first concert that Ailey staged at the 92nd Street Y. Delores became discouraged by the lack of opportunities for black ballerinas in American companies and left the dance world for several years but came back in the mid 1960s with a new determination to be successful. She danced in concerts with John Jones and later joined Talley Beatty's company in Boston from 1969 to 1973.

Ms. Browne returned to New York in 1973 after she married Roger Abelson. At that time Alvin Ailey asked her to coordinate the scholarship students at the Ailey School, where she worked with Tom Stevens in developing the program. At about the same time, Delores began teaching at Philadanco at Joan Meyers Brown's invitation. In addition to teaching at Ailey and directing the scholarship program, Ms. Browne helped build the second company for Ailey out of students at the school. Although she left her teaching and administrative duties at Ailey for a time in the 1980s to concentrate on her art gallery, she later returned to teaching there and continued at Philadanco for more than 40 years.

Ms. Browne established October Art, a gallery in New York City featuring the work of Native American artists from the Southwest with her husband Roger. The two of them traveled to the Southwest to meet the artists in their home region and solicit their work for the gallery. Among the artists that Ms. Browne developed a relationship with was Harry Fonseca. Ms. Browne began collecting Native American artwork herself; a visitor to her apartment was always struck by the wealth and breadth of her collection. After her marriage dissolved, Ms. Browne closed the gallery.

Ms. Browne treasured her relationships with her friends, former students and family members. She was known as a warm hostess and enjoyed preparing elaborate meals for visitors. She enjoyed spending time with her brother, Sam, and took an active interest in her nieces and nephews. At the same time, Delores cultivated her love of the arts by visiting galleries and museums and attending the theater and dance and music concerts. She was generous in her financial support of dance companies, such as the Alvin Ailey Company, Philadanco and more recently the Dance Theatre of Harlem.

Survivors

Delores is survived by her brother, Samuel Brown II, her niece, Shari Garcia, her nephew, Samuel Brown III and his wife, Tracye Brown, her niece, Simona Brown, her nephew, Anthony Brown and eight great-nieces and great-nephews.

Acknowledgement

The family wishes to express its gratitude to the nurse and home health aides who worked tirelessly to make Delores's final months comfortable and who buoyed her spirits with their encouragement.

