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GIRLISH BEAUTY

by Hilton Als

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The composer, vocalist, dancer, and director Meredith Monk is now an incredible sixty-six years old. To see her perform—as I did this past March, at the Guggenheim, in “Ascension Variations,” a revival of her 1969 theatre piece “Juice”—is to watch an artist who seems never to have been made moribund by the strictures imposed by adulthood. Monk’s fecund imagination dwells in the garden of girlhood, burrowing beneath what society demands of females beginning in their youth—an almost silent “niceness”—to express her inner life. (Indeed, one of her most moving performances is “The Education of the Girl Child,” from 1973.) On June 3, Monk will perform at the Bang on a Can benefit, at (Le) Poisson Rouge; she’ll also be in concert in Milan. But, if you can’t make either of those shows, have a look at Babeth M. VanLoo’s recent documentary, “Meredith Monk: Inner Voice.” In it, Monk gives full rise to her multigenerational selves, always making performance new. ♦

ILLUSTRATION: RACHEL DOMM

