

Rennie Harris
PUREMOVEMENT

"Hip Hop is about the celebration of life."- Rennie Harris

20th
Anniversary





Dr. Lorenzo Rennie Harris (hon)

(Artistic Director, Choreographer, Professor, Innovator)

celebrates hip hop culture on his own terms, by using some of the world's most influential forms of movement, music, and storytelling to revolutionize contemporary concert dance.

"Harris has become the Basquiat of the US contemporary dance scene." - The Sunday Times, London

Born and raised in North Philadelphia, Harris has been teaching workshops and classes at universities around the country and is one of the most powerful spokespersons for the significance of "street" origins in any dance style.

Harris began his career as a performer. Harris performed for crowds at clubs, parties and within his community along with his first company, the Scanner Boys in the 1980's (a hip hop performance group of which Harris was a founding member).

According to Harris, he didn't become a part of the "legitimate" dance community until 1992, when he was invited to participate in the Susan Hess Choreographer's Project. In 1992 Harris founded Rennie Harris Puremovement, a hip hop dance company dedicated to preserving and disseminating hip hop culture through workshops, classes, hip hop history lecture demonstrations, long term residencies, mentoring programs and public performances.

Rennie Harris Puremovement was created based on the belief that hip hop is the most important original expression of a new generation. With its roots in the inner-city African-American and Latino communities, hip hop can be characterized as a contemporary indigenous form, one that expresses universal themes that extend beyond racial, religious, and economic boundaries, and one that (because of its pan-racial and transnational popularity) can help bridge these divisions. Harris' work encompasses the diverse and rich African-American traditions of the past, while simultaneously presenting the voice of a new generation through its ever-evolving interpretations of dance.

Harris is committed to providing audiences with a sincere view of the essence and spirit of hip hop rather than the commercially exploited stereotypes portrayed by the media. As Harris develops as a choreographer, he continues to profoundly influence the field of contemporary dance. Harris shows us the integral connections between body movements through the philosophy inherent in the company's name, "Puremovement of mind, body, and soul."

Since establishing the company (20) years ago, Rennie Harris has continually demonstrated his outstanding talent for utilizing his distinctive and compelling contributions to dance vocabulary.

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- 1991 Rennie Harris is commissioned for the first time by Michael Pedretti of Movement Theater International, a pivotal moment in his development as an artist.
- 1992 Rennie Harris Puremovement is adopted as the name of the first Hip Hop dance company with members: Anisa Morgan, Kim Wilson, Elizabeth Jacobs, Doris Humphrey, Clyde Evans, James Colter, Brandon Albright and Rennie Harris.
- 1995 Chuck Davis invites Rennie Harris Puremovement to perform as part of Dance Africa- America, giving the company national visibility.
- 1996 Rennie Harris receives his 1st fellowship, the Pew Charitable Trust Choreographer Initiative.
- 1998 Illadelph Legends Festival was conceived in Philadelphia. It offered classes, for the first time, to students from around the world by master teachers that pioneered and innovated Hip Hop street dance.
- 1999 Rennie Harris Puremovement receives non- profit status while simultaneously premiering Legends of Hip Hop.
- 2000 Rome & Jewels, an adaptation of Romeo & Juliet and West Side Story, premieres and tours nationally and internationally.
- 2001 Rennie Harris wins (3) Bessie Awards for Rome & Jewels, receives the Alvin Ailey Award for Choreography and is nominated for the Laurence Olivier award.
- 2003 Facing Mekka premieres and Rennie Harris receives the Herb Albert Award for Choreography.
- 2004 Rennie Harris receives the key to the city of South Beach, Miami.
- 2005 Rennie Harris premieres a Hip Hop sci-fi entitled **100 NAKED LOCKS**.
- 2007 Rennie Harris is named Pennsylvania artist of the year. He also receives the Guggenheim Award and an honorary doctorate from Bates College. In addition, Rennie Harris creates Rennie Harris Awe-Inspiring Works (RHAW) as a second company for upcoming street dancers.
- 2011 Rennie Harris premieres a b-girl ballet to Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring" entitled Heaven. It premiered at the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia.
- 2012 Rennie Harris Puremovement is chosen as ambassadors of the US by the Obama administration with Hillary Clinton's Dance Motion USA. Rennie Harris Puremovement turns 20 years old.



Rennie
Harris

PUREMOVEMENT

Works

"Hip hop dance to a higher power, in both the mathematical and the metaphysical senses..."
- The Village Voice



Repertory

RHPM's signature "Repertory Program" showcases a vibrant collective of classic work from the past twenty years including; P-Funk" (1992), focuses on the individuality and group dynamics of Harris' athletic male dancers; "March of the Antmen" (1992), a reflective and timely politically charged work that draws upon the tone and aura of an original musical score created by Harris' friend Dru Minyard whose life and death inspired the piece; and "Continuum" (1997), a dazzling cipher that showcases the breathtaking virtuosity of Harris and his company and "Students of the Asphalt Jungle" a hallmark of Hip hop dance vocabulary which has [for Hip hop] been handed down through spirit and instinct. RHPM's Repertory program also includes "Something to do with Love Vol. I" which is the first installment of a three part flirty, infectious romp set to the timeless rhythms of Marvin Gaye and Nina Simone.



Rome and Jewels

Rome & Jewels is the first evening length work, choreographed and directed by Rennie Harris in collaboration with dramaturge Ozzie Jones and composer/sound designer Darin Ross. Rome & Jewels uses Shakespeare's text, in addition to original material contributed by the cast, to tell its own story based on West Side Story and Romeo and Juliet. With 3 Bessie Awards, 2 Black Theater Alvin Ailey Awards, a nomination for an Herb Alpert award and a nomination for a Lawrence Olivier Award (UK) Rome & Jewels has performed for sold-out audiences nationally and internationally.



Facing Mekka

“Facing Mekka” weaves a landscape of music, movement, rhythm, sound and images that fuse together elements of African and hip hop cultures. Facing Mekka is an epic journey through world cultures and its landscape composed through movement and music of people across the globe. It is an international celebration through Hip hop with a variety of rhythmic expressions and is ultimately an expedition to find the commonalties culture surveyed through the language of hip hop dance.



100 NAKED LOCKS

A regionally and nationally significant new work that deconstructs the hip hop dance movement considered, by many, as the very first dance form developed under the heading of “hip hop dance”. Harris utilizes kinesthetic innovative sets of movement dynamics through the use of the individualism, texture, and physicality of “locking.” This choreographic work addresses the hip hop dance movement created in the late 60’s early 70’s by dancer Don Campbell called “locking”. It also addresses the caustic contrast of how hip hop movement is often used in ways that can only be deemed as “stereotypical” behavior through negative portrayals/perceptions of blacks in entertainment. Through “100 Naked Locks” Harris addresses an often, painful time in American pop culture and presents audiences with varying depictions of cultural figures, families, and lifestyles. Both a politically and socially significant addition to RHPM’s current repertory works roster.



Heaven: A B-girl Ballet

Described by Harris as his most ambitious and intricate work of his career, “Heaven: A B-Girl Ballet” showcases a production platform and cultural impact rarely highlighted within the Hip hop dance theater arena. Heaven employs Stravinsky’s “Rite of Spring.” The re-fashioning of this celebrated dance classic allows Harris to challenge the possibilities of Hip hop theatre, his own artistic merit and credit the role of women in Hip hop dance. This collaborative love story utilizes women and the breaking movement vocabulary which is one of the most physical, athletic and masculine forms.

Education Outreach

Rennie Harris Puremovement is guided by an artistic moral philosophy that every individual is a creative reservoir waiting to be tapped. Training is merely a tool for enhancing the individual's ability and for binding individuals to work together "en masse."

Hip Hop Master Class

In studio classes include exercises to develop muscle strength, flexibility and stamina. The basic movement and techniques are defined, practiced, and developed into combinations. Hip hop styles are explored as sources for inspiration and vocabulary for choreography. In addition, the movement is technically tied to complex and often driving rhythms.

History of Hip Hop Lecture/Demonstration

Moderated by senior members of the company, this lecture introduces audiences to personalities who influenced or invented various techniques or styles that have contributed to the hip hop dance culture. More importantly, this lecture/demonstration illustrates how hip hop has its roots in African tradition and culture through out the diaspora- including African American, Afro-Brazilian, Afro-Cuban and Puerto Rican cultures from the early sixties throughout today.



*"... The patterns and the dancers' physical control were stunning."
- The New York Times*





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