“Hip-hop is about the celebration of life.” — Rennie Harris

Inspired by the life and legacy of Mr. Ailey, hip hop choreographer Rennie Harris – the organization’s inaugural Artist-in-Residence in 2018 – connects past and present in a powerful ensemble work that addresses the racial inequities America faced when Mr. Ailey founded this company in 1958 and still faces today. The Company’s first two-act ballet, Lazarus is set to a soundtrack produced by Darrin Ross, with his original music, and featuring Nina Simone, Terrence Trent D’Arby, Michael Kiwanuka, Odetta, spoken text written and adapted by Rennie Harris that is performed by Wadud Ahmad, Rennie Harris, as well as the voice of Alvin Ailey. Harris’ previous contributions to the Ailey repertory include Exodus (2015), Home (2011), and Love Stories (2004), an acclaimed collaboration with Judith Jamison and Robert Battle.

As Ailey’s inaugural Artist-in-Residence, Harris led a large range of activities including serving as an artistic advisor to the New Directions Choreography Lab, conducting master classes and delivering lectures about choreography and the history of hip-hop to Ailey II and students and instructors at The Ailey School and Ailey Arts-In-Education, and teaching workshops open to the public through the Ailey Extension.

“an exhilarating celebration of life, dance, and the body in motion.”
The New Yorker

“America’s hottest ballet”
The Philadelphia Inquirer

“...brings Ailey back to life by showing why he still matters to a living artist of Mr. Harris’s caliber... many brilliant samples in a score by Darrin Ross that is rarely simple... When that music is going, Mr. Harris gives us something like heaven.”
The New York Times

Rennie Harris

Rennie (Lorenzo) Harris has been known to mix Shakespeare with hip hop, poetry, rap music and movement. He is a pioneer in performing, choreographing, teaching and introducing this African-American dance form hip hop to a worldwide audience and revolutionizing contemporary concert dance.

Raised in an inner-city community on the north side of Philadelphia, Harris started dancing hip-hop at a young age. He began teaching classes and workshops at age 15, and has since taught at schools and universities across the United States including Harvard University, Bryn Mawr College, University of the Arts, UCLA, University of Colorado, Columbia College, and Bates College, among others.
In 1992, Harris founded Rennie Harris Puremovement (RHPM) based on the belief that hip-hop is the most important original expression of a new generation, with the unique ability to express universal themes that extend beyond racial, religious, and economic boundaries, and as a way of bringing street dance to the concert stage, and to a broader audience. The company has performed all over the globe, along with conducting workshops, classes, lecture-demonstrations, dance residencies, mentoring programs and public performances. In a society where hip-hop is often portrayed as a violent, undisciplined counterculture, RHPM deconstructs popular perception of this medium, expanding and challenging the boundaries and definitions of hip-hop in general, while focusing on the philosophy inherent in the company’s name, “Puremovement of mind, body, and soul.”

As Rennie Harris grows as a choreographer, he continues to profoundly influence the contemporary dance field while honoring the history, exploring the ideas and furthering the contributions of hip hop to the surrounding community. In 2000, he created Rome and Jewels, which re-visions Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, combining dance, theatre and rap. Other works include Heaven, 100 Naked Locks, Legends of Hip Hop, Endangered Species and Facing Mekka. He worked with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater on Love Stories (2004), Home (2011), and Exodus (2015), and is currently serving as the organization’s first Artist-in-Residence.

Rennie Harris has been recognized for his distinctive and compelling contributions to dance vocabulary based on his personal choreographic vision with awards such as the Pew Charitable Trust Choreographer Initiative Fellowship, three Bessie Awards, a Laurence Olivier Award nomination, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and most recently a Dance Magazine Award. A powerful spokesperson for the significance of “street” origins in any dance style, he has also one of 50 prestigious United States Artists Fellowships, an honorary doctorate from Bates College, 2007 Pennsylvania Artist of the Year, and was voted one of the most influential people in the last one hundred years of Philadelphia history. His composition LUV: American-Style (2015) focused on Dr. Harris' laws of hip hop -- individuality, creativity and innovation - - as the energetic young RHAW crew rocks out using Campbell locking, popping & boogaloo, B-Boying and hip hop to vividly tell the story of a teenage boy searching for his purpose.

American Express is the Official Card of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and a major supporter of the creation of Lazarus.

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**Lazarus**

*Music Credit Information*

Original music composed and produced by Darrin Ross.

“Feeling Good” performed by Nina Simone, written by Anthony Newley and Leslie Bricusse.

“As Yet Untitled” performed by Terence Trent D’Arby, used by agreement with BMG Rights Management, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

“Black Man in a White World” performed by Michael Kiwanuka, written by Dean Cover and Michael Kiwanuka, all rights administered by WB Music Corp. (ASCAP).

“Glory, Glory” performed by Odetta.


Spoken text written and adapted by Rennie Harris, performed by Wadud Ahmad, Rennie Harris, and Darrin Ross. Vocals by Alonzo Chadwick, Phinizea Chadwick, Trenelle Doyle, Simone Jordan, Carl Robinson Jr., and Joshua Sommerville.