



The University of Texas at Austin

Theatre and Dance

College of Fine Arts

For immediate release:

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE AND DANCE
WELCOMES RENOWNED CHOREOGRAPHER AND EDUCATOR
DR. LORENZO “RENNIE” HARRIS
TO THE DANCE FACULTY

The University of Texas at Austin Department of Theatre and Dance is pleased to announce the faculty appointment of renowned choreographer Dr. Lorenzo “Rennie” Harris. Recognized by the United States Department of Education as a leading ambassador for the art of hip-hop dance, Harris will teach technique classes, set repertory and offer a lecture course on hip-hop dance history and aesthetics at the university beginning January 2018. Harris’s current dancer and choreographic assistant, Millie Heckler will also teach a variety of studio courses to dance majors as well as the wider university student population beginning in August 2017.

“The university’s dance curriculum is designed to develop concrete skills in performance, pedagogy and choreography and to instill an intellectually deep appreciation of the role that dance plays in human culture,” shares Charles O. Anderson, associate professor and head of Dance. “Much more than a musical genre, hip-hop culture exists as an animating force in the lives of many young adults. Rennie Harris is a revolutionary of contemporary concert dance and one of the most powerful spokespersons for the significance of street origins in any dance style. The contributions he brings to the university are immeasurable.”

Lorenzo “Rennie” Harris was born and raised in North Philadelphia and has become synonymous with hip-hop dance theatre. In 1992, he founded Rennie Harris Puremovement, a company dedicated to preserving and disseminating hip-hop culture. He has received a number of arts and academic honors, including the Guggenheim Fellowship, the Herb Alpert Award in the Arts and USArtist International fellowships and honorary

doctorate degrees from Columbia College in Chicago, Illinois and Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. *The London Times* described Harris as “the Basquiat of the U.S. contemporary dance scene.” Additionally, he was voted one of the most influential people in the last 100 years of Philadelphia history. Rennie Harris Puremovement was chosen by *DanceMotion USA* as one of four companies to serve as citizen-diplomats to tour Egypt, Israel, Palestinian territories and Jordan in 2012. Among his numerous achievements and extensive choreographic repertoire, Harris’s work includes three commissioned works in the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre repertory: *Love Stories* (a collaboration with Judith Jamison and Robert Battle), *Home* and *Exodus*.

“Harris has built a wedge that will open the doors of America’s art centers, displaying hip hop as clear cultural expression, compelling to all races and generations...”

- *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

“Defined by a dynamic blend of theory and practice, The University of Texas at Austin is the place to expand and deepen physical training. We draw upon multiple disciplines and artistic approaches while encouraging students to position their work within broad social context,” explains Anderson. “Harris understands that hip-hop is much more than a form of entertainment; he believes it can speak to all sorts of people, despite their differences, making it an important tool for expression and social progress. Through his work and teaching Harris will impress upon our students the power hip-hop has to draw people together and communicate messages on both an individual and universal level.”

ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE AND DANCE

The University of Texas at Austin Department of Theatre and Dance is a world-class educational environment that serves as the ultimate creative incubator for the next generation of artists, thinkers and leaders in theatre and performance.

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