# ALVIN AILEY American dance theater

# **HOME**

(2011)

Choreography by Rennie Harris
Assistant Choreographer: Nina Flagg
Music by Dennis Ferrer and Raphael Xavier
Costumes by Jon Taylor
Lighting by Stephen Arnold

The bold hip-hop choreographer Rennie Harris — who was a part of Judith Jamison's dynamic collaboration to create *Love Stories* (2004), along with Robert Battle — returns to the Ailey company to create *Home*, set to a soul-lifting score of gospel house music. This work is inspired by the stories of people living with or affected by HIV, as shared through the poems and images submitted to the *Fight HIV Your Way* contest, an initiative of Bristol-Myers Squibb. In its third year, the contest broke new ground, using the power of dance to celebrate the moving journeys of people across the country that are fighting HIV their way. The world premiere took place on a day of major significance, December 1, 2011, both World AIDS Day and the day founder Alvin Ailey died from the disease 22 years ago.



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in Rennie Harris' *Home.* Photo by Paul Kolnik

# "Hip-hop is about the celebration of life." — Rennie Harris

#### **Rennie Harris**



Rennie Harris. Photo by Rose Eichenbaum

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 the 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-envisions 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, Judith Jamison's dynamic 2004 collaboration that also involved Robert Battle and was set to the music of Stevie Wonder.

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, 3 Bessie Awards, the Herb Albert Award for Choreography, a Laurence Olivier Award nomination and a Guggenheim Fellowship. 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.

- "...these dancers have no rhythmic limits ... an anguished, ecstatic testimony to dance and community..."

   Jean Lenihan, Los Angeles Times, March 7, 2012
- "Another audience hit this season...a visually compelling series of hip-hop moves by some of the most adept dancers in the world. ...you couldn't argue with the pleasure it brought the crowd."
  - —Jocelyn Noveck, Associated Press, Jan. 3, 2012
- "...the **smartly poetic choreographer** Rennie Harris..." The New York Times
- "We are seeing dance theater history being made." Dance Magazine
- "Harris has become the Basquiat of the US contemporary dance scene." The Sunday Times, London
- "...the virtuosic footwork, the marvelous undulations of the hips and, above all, the intricate patterns of Mr. Harris's choreographic formations. **He knows how to move bodies in space, how to layer his phrases and, above all, how to make dancers look good."** *The New York Times*

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# Music Credit Information

Song: Underground Is My Home

Written and Performed by: Dennis Ferrer

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Song: I See...Do You

Composed by: Raphael Xavier

Performed by: Raphael Xavier, with D. Sabela Grimes