ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

Exodus

(World Premiere – 2015)

Choreography by Rennie Harris
Assistant Choreographer/Rehearsal Director: Nina Flagg
Music by Various Artists
Costumes by Jon Taylor
Lighting by James Clotfelter
Choreographer's Assistant: Millie Heckler

The world premiere of *Exodus* is made possible
with leadership support from Melinda & Paul Pressler.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in Rennie Harris' *Exodus*.
Photo bv Paul Kolnik

Acclaimed hip-hop choreographer **Rennie (Lorenzo) Harris** creates a highly-anticipated world premiere that explores the idea of "exodus" – from one's ignorance and conformity – as a necessary step toward enlightenment. Set to gospel and house music along with spoken word, the work underscores the crucial role of action and movement in effecting change. Exemplifying his view of hip hop as a "celebration of life," *Exodus* marks Harris' latest invitation to return to spiritual basics and affirm who we are. His previous contributions to the Ailey repertory include *Home* (2011) and *Love Stories* (2004), an acclaimed collaboration with Judith Jamison and Robert Battle.

"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

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

Rennie Harris.

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-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. His most recent 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.

Original compositions by Raphael Xavier. "A New Deal" by Ost & Kjex.