

2024/25 SEASON

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STEP AFRiKA!



MAGICAL MUSICAL HOLIDAY STEP SHOW

DEC 13 – 22

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Holiday Step Show* program book
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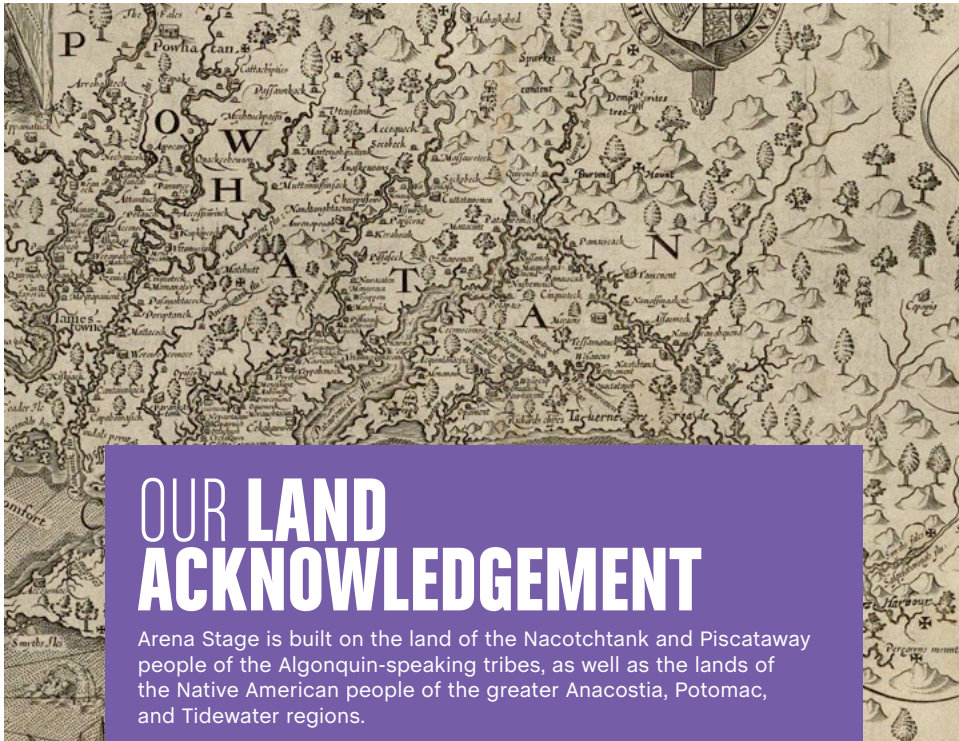


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ARENA STAGE'S MISSION

Arena Stage is the voice of American theater resident in our nation's capital. Focused on American artists, our productions are innovative and representative of stories from across the country. We nurture new plays and reimagine classics. We celebrate our democracy and diversity through a multitude of voices in our productions and community engagement programs to inspire people to action. We produce all that is passionate, exuberant, profound, entertaining, deep and dangerous in the American spirit.



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ARTISTICALLY SPEAKING

The holiday season offers each of us a singular opportunity to celebrate love and the power of community as we reflect on blessings and lessons from the nearly-finished year and revel in the cherished traditions of faith and family that bring us closer to the ones we hold dear. It is in this spirit of togetherness, nostalgia, and exuberant joy that I welcome you to the return of *Step Afrika!'s Magical Musical Holiday Step Show*—an electrifying performance by an incredible company of dancers that has filled our Fichandler Stage with its one-of-a-kind virtuosity for years. Arena's own family tradition, if you will.

Step Afrika!'s breathtaking artistry is perfect for the whole family, and it is highly possible that nobody loves the *Magical Musical Holiday Step Show* more than my children. My girls look forward to this musical extravaganza every year, and I can't help but be swept up in the magic of their enthusiasm. As the days grow shorter and the cold encroaches, I am inspired by the warmth and tenacity of my children's delight. They are dazzled by the lively music and invigorating rhythms the dancers share onstage: in short, the universal language of joy. In the spirit of so many wintry traditions, regardless of creed, we can all be called to ward off the heaviness of winter and lean into the luster and celebration of the season of lights.

Thank you, as always, for joining us this year. As the lights dim, may you find hope in the joy of our little ones, and comfort in the connections we share in this sacred communal space. I hope this holiday season brings you light, love, and the cherished comfort of community.

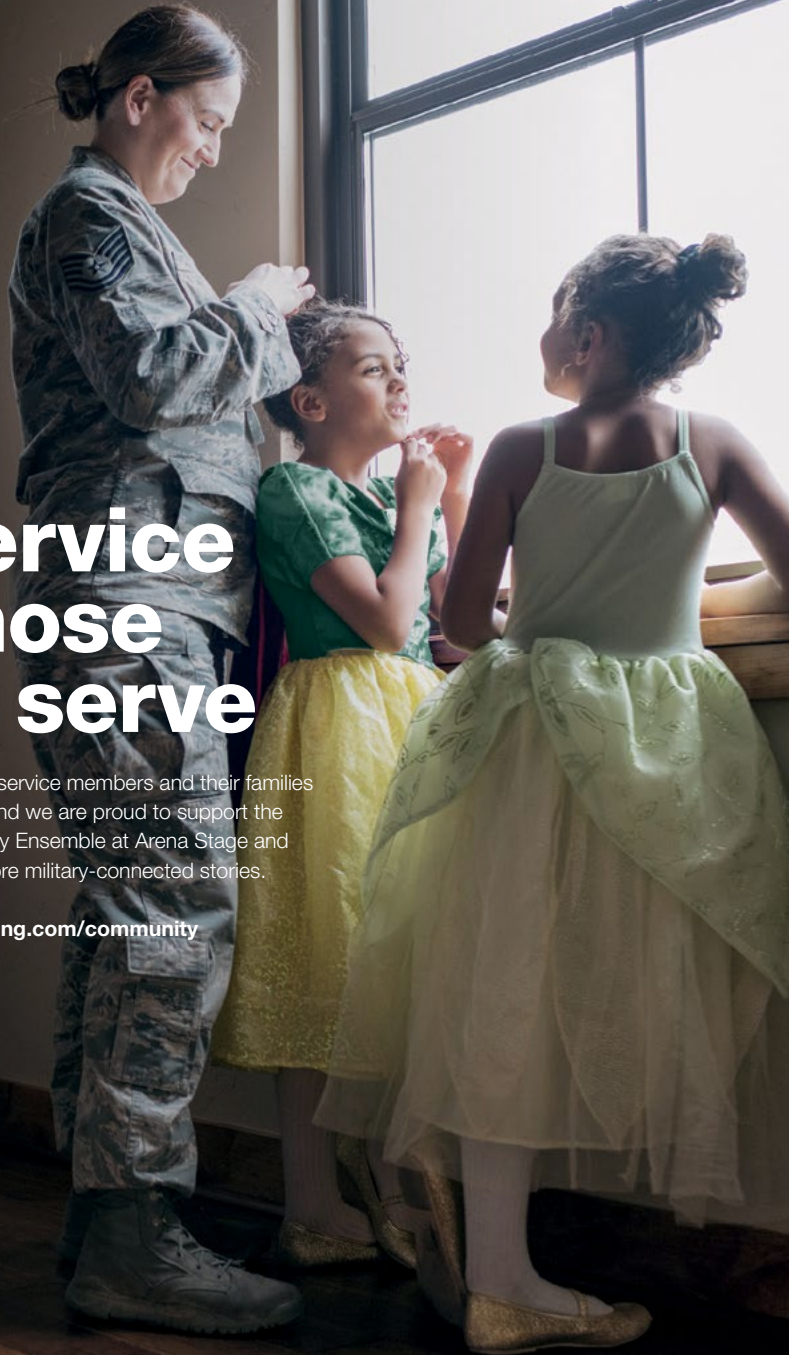
Warmly,

Hana S. Sharif
Artistic Director, Arena Stage

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Annual traditions are an important part of everyone's lives, whether they are self-created, family-based, faith-based, or community-based. What a pleasure it is to welcome you to the annual tradition of *Step Afrika!'s Magical Musical Holiday Step Show*. I hope to hear you were dancing in the aisles!

At a quick glance, Arena and Step Afrika! may seem to be unlikely dance partners. Unlikely partnerships often provide the most deep and meaningful connections, and we at Arena consider our fellow artists with Step Afrika! to be intimate friends and comrades. I absolutely believe that Tom and Zelda Fichandler are dancing along with us in spirit. Their open-hearted leadership definitely would have embraced this powerful storytelling celebrated on their namesake stage.

Step Afrika!'s residency with Arena is more than this annual holiday extravaganza. You may recall 2022's *Drumfolk*, a visual telling inspired by the Stono Rebellion of 1739, and this past summer's *The Migration: Reflections on Jacob Lawrence*, inspired by Lawrence's paintings. However, you may not be aware that Arena has also been the home to Step Afrika!'s summer camp, Summer Steps, a week-long camp for rising 4th to 12th graders, for the past two years as well. I can assure you that there are few things more invigorating than the echoes of the steps and shouts of the young people during that boisterous week.

As I'm sure you have experienced, it is not unusual for theaters to have an annual tradition like this one, which in many cases may be a production of *A Christmas Carol*, but that is certainly not the only example. It's important to note as well that having an annual tradition does not mean commonplace. Whenever we prepare for our personal traditions, whether an anniversary or other holiday tradition, we all place importance on the arrangements and execution. I imagine many if not most Americans can recall family Thanksgivings with the special china, the turkey, and the pies—and when prepared fully and properly resourced the execution is the stuff of classic memories. It's what makes you want to come back every year. The same intensity and work ethic that these artists put toward all performances are joyfully evident within the annual tradition you are part of today.

The end of another calendar year is naturally a time of reflection as well. I imagine we are all musing on lessons learned through the past year. I am grateful to have the opportunity to share this joyous performance with you today and I hope that we meet again often in 2025.

Warmly,



Edgar Dobie
Executive Producer, Arena Stage
President of the Corporation



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STEP AFRIKA! FOUNDER'S NOTE

Dear Friends,

Welcome to *Step Afrika!'s Magical Musical Holiday Step Show!* After a year filled with incredible performances and meaningful arts education programs, we are thrilled to be home in Washington, DC, at the enchanting Arena Stage. The Fichandler is truly a magical theater, providing the perfect place for our highly interactive production. **Step Afrika! crafted this performance for both the young and the young at heart, creating a space where everyone can sing, make music, and dance together!** This time of year is extra special for me, and I can't wait for you to play and party with the celebrated artists of Step Afrika!. Trust me, the more noise you make, the more fun we'll have! And besides...who wants to sit still and be quiet for the holidays?!

Please visit our table in the lobby to learn more about the final months of Step Afrika!'s 30th Anniversary Season. Highlights include the **Step Afrika! Step Classic** in February 2025, a dynamic celebration featuring top step teams from across the country, and **Summer Steps with Step Afrika!** in August 2025, a unique summer camp experience for young students at Arena Stage. And don't miss our final performance of the season at **Strathmore** in June 2025, featuring all-new dance works and an unforgettable collaboration.

Step Afrika! never tires of serving our community, and we're thrilled to have you with us. Visit stepafrika.org to explore our work on stages and in schools, and join our newsletter for updates from DC and beyond. Thank you for choosing to spend your holidays with us!

Wishing you a season filled with joy and all your favorite things.

C. Brian Williams
Founder & Executive Producer, Step Afrika!



Photo of *Step Afrika!'s Magical Musical Holiday Step Show* at Arena Stage by Jati Lindsay.



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ABOUT STEP AFRIKA!

Founded in 1994 by C. Brian Williams, Step Afrika! is the world's leading authority on the artform of stepping. Under Mr. Williams' leadership, stepping has evolved into one of America's cultural exports, touring more than 60 countries across the globe and ranking as one of the top 10 African American Dance Companies in the US.

Step Afrika! blends percussive dance styles practiced by historically African American fraternities and sororities; traditional African dances; and an array of contemporary dance and art forms into a cohesive, compelling artistic experience. Performances are much more than dance shows; they integrate songs, storytelling, humor, and audience participation. The blend of technique, agility, and pure energy makes each performance unique and leaves the audience with their hearts pounding.

Step Afrika! promotes stepping as an educational tool for young people, focusing on teamwork, academic achievement, and cross-cultural understanding. The Company reaches tens of thousands of Americans each year through a 50-city tour of colleges and theaters and performs globally as Washington, DC's one and only Cultural Ambassador.

Step Afrika! has earned Mayor's Arts Awards for Outstanding Contribution to Arts Education, Innovation in the Arts, Excellence in an Artistic Discipline, and Excellence in the Performing Arts, and was inducted into the National Association of Campus Activities (NACA) Hall of Fame, the first Dance Company to earn this honor. Step Afrika! headlined President Barack Obama's Black History Month Reception and performed at the first ever Juneteenth Celebration at the White House. The Company is featured prominently at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History & Culture with the world's first stepping interactive exhibit.

ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

C. Brian Williams, *Founder & Executive Producer*

Lamar Lovelace, *Executive Director*

Mfoniso Akpan, *Artistic Director*

Conrad R. Kelly II, *Assistant Artistic Director*

Margo Cunningham, *Senior Marketing Manager*

Pascha Barnwell, *Company Manager*

Chrystal Vaughan, *Manager, Events and Special Projects*

Joe Murchison, *Project Manager, Arts Education and Community Programming*

LEARN MORE

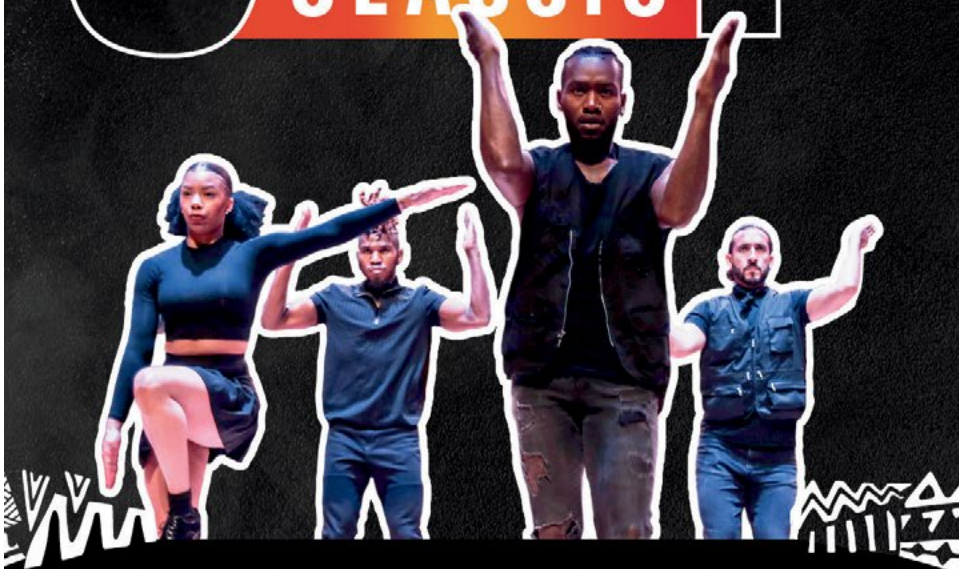


Scan the QR code or visit stepafrika.org to learn more!

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STEP AFRİKA!

MAGICAL MUSICAL HOLIDAY STEP SHOW

DIRECTED BY
MFONISO AKPAN

FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
C. BRIAN WILLIAMS

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
MFONISO AKPAN

ASSISTANT ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
CONRAD R. KELLY II

LIGHTING DESIGNER &
PRODUCTION MANAGER
MARIANNE MEADOWS*

ASSOCIATE LIGHTING DESIGNER
YANNICK GODTS

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PROGRAM

1. 12 Drummers Drumming
2. Jabulani!
3. March of the Nutcrackers
4. Popper the Penguin's Arctic Step Challenge
5. DJ Nutcracker's Yuletide Step Workshop
6. Here We GO-GO
7. Home for the Holidays

Audience participation has been a part of the step tradition since its inception in the 1900s. Members of the audience are invited to clap, stomp, cheer and participate in call and response with the Company.

COMPANY

Kenneth L. Alexander Nya Christian Jerod Coleman
 Ariel Dykes Keomi Givens Jr. Leander Gray Kamala Hargrove
 Terrence Johnson Conrad R. Kelly II Jemeema S. Montrose
 Isaiah O'Connor Keanu Powell Ericka Still
 Brie Turner Joseph Vasquez Pelham Warner Jr.
 Robert Warnsley TreShawn Williams
 with Special Guest Jeeda Barrington

FOR THIS PRODUCTION

Show Caller.....REGINA VITALE
 Production Assistant.....HOWARD BOLDEN, TREVION WALKER
 Props Technician.....SIMON ADRIAN
 Light Board Operator.....SCOTT FOLSOM
 Audio Engineer.....ALEX CLOUD
 Wardrobe.....COURTNEY JOHNSON, SABRINA SIMMONS

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COMPANY



KENNETH L. ALEXANDER is a native of Savannah, GA, with a BFA in Interior Design from Valdosta State University. First introduced to stepping through the Sigma Beta Club, Kenneth became a proud member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., and Delta Phi Delta Dance Fraternity, Inc., where he served as Step and Stroll Master for both organizations. He has trained in hip-hop under VYB Dance Company and performed at the Super Bowl LV Halftime Show in Tampa Bay. This is Kenneth's second season with the Company.



NYA CHRISTIAN is a native of Cleveland, OH, with a BA in Political Science, Sociology, and Dance Arts from Howard University. A proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, she has served as the Alpha Chapter Parliamentarian, Step Mistress, and Stroll Captain. Nya has choreographed performances for the White House Initiative on HBCUs and Howard University's 2022 Homecoming Step Show. She also performed on *Good Morning America* as part of the Black History Month segment "The Story of 9 Historically Black Fraternities and Sororities." This is Nya's second season with the Company.



JEROD COLEMAN is a native of Columbus, GA, with a BA in History from the University of South Alabama. He is a member of the Theta Delta Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., where he served as Step and Stroll Master. Jerod has performed with the entertainment teams of the Atlanta Braves, Atlanta Falcons, Red Bull Dance Your Style, and DreamHack ATL. He also taught at Thomas H. Brewer Elementary

School in Columbus, GA, where he founded and led an all-boys step team called the B.L.U.E. Steppers. This is Jerod's second season with the Company.



ARIEL DYKES is a native of Gainesville, FL, with an Associate of Arts in Musical Theatre from Santa Fe College and a BFA in Dance from the University of Florida. She is a member of the Iota Lambda Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., where she choreographed step routines for her chapter and UF's National Panhellenic Council. Ariel has trained in ballet, jazz, West African, and post-modern dance, as well as voice and acting. She has worked with notable artists such as Ailey Dancers Nathaniel Hunt and Samantha Barriento; Tony Award winner Scott Coulter; and Grammy Award-winning Gospel artist Smokey Norful. This is Ariel's third season with the Company.



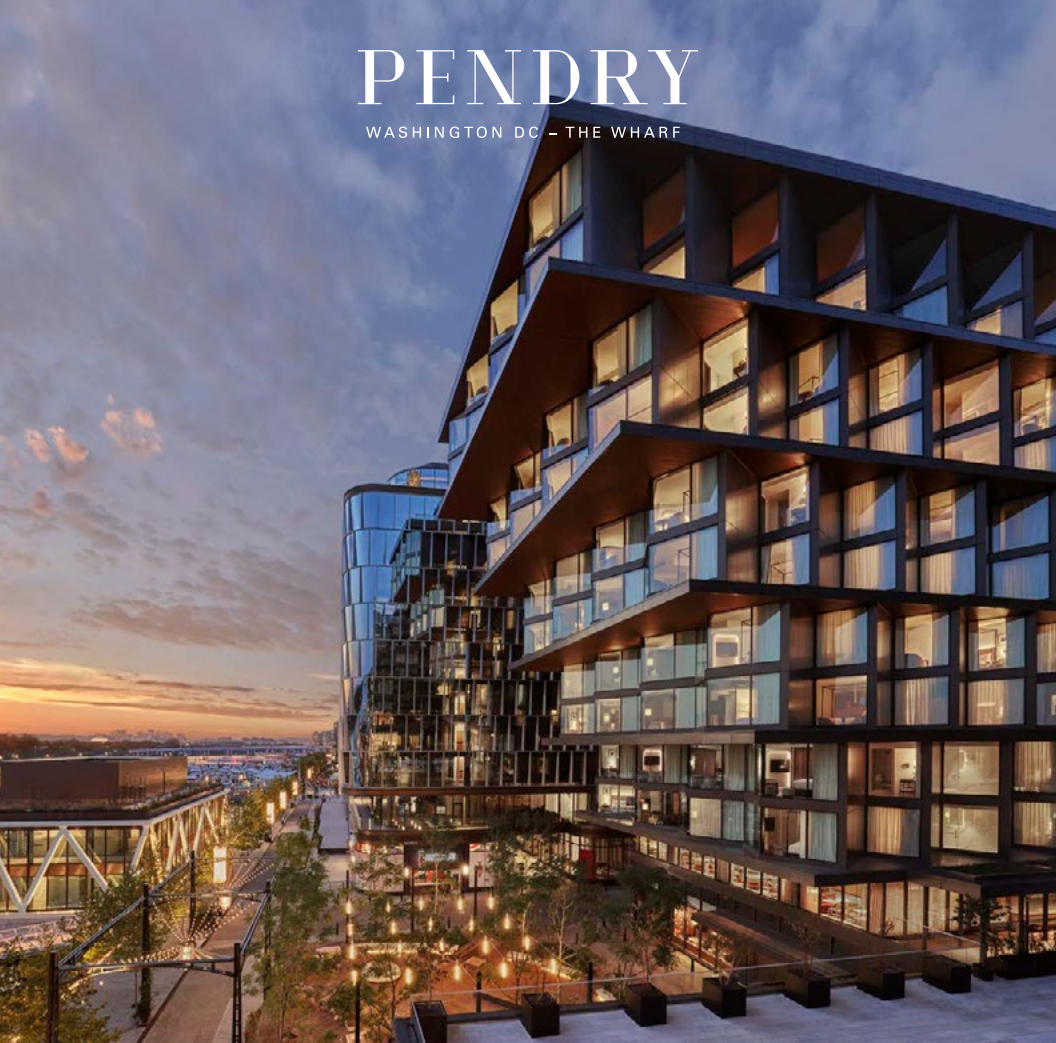
KEOMI GIVENS JR. is a native of Miami, FL, where he trained with Ricardo Dume, Traci Young-Byron, Conrad Kelly II, Tanisha Cidel, Maribel Trujillo, and Robert Battle. He has studied at the New World School of the Arts and The Mahogany Dance Theatre, where he served as Rehearsal Director and choreographer. Keomi has danced with Gravity Dance Troupe and Young Contemporary Dance Theatre (YCDT). In addition to his work as a dancer, Keomi has choreographed for The Marching 100 of Florida A&M University, RickyDanco, and the Booker T. Washington Lady Twisters. This is Keomi's second season with the Company.



LEANDER GRAY is a native of Washington, D.C., and studied at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. Leander has performed at the Black Leaves Project, CityDance Creating the Magic Concerts, Art All Night DC, the Elements Urban Arts Collective Annual

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Showcase, and the DC Youth Freestyle Battle. He has participated in the prestigious Monsters of Hip Hop Intensive and the Kennedy Center Dance Lab and was featured in a music video by Revolution Marz. This is Leander's first season with the Company.



KAMALA HARGROVE is a native of the Bronx, NY, with a BA in Mathematics, Theater, and Dance from Trinity College, where she earned a BA in Mathematics, Theater, and Dance. Kamala

studied at The Ailey School and Dance Theatre of Harlem and has appeared in various music videos and live performances. She has performed with artists including Estelle, Mr. Vegas, Wizkid, and French Montana. Kamala has also worked as a Teaching Artist in New York City, instructing elementary, middle, and high school students. This is Kamala's third season with the Company.



TERRENCE JOHNSON is a native of Broward County, FL, with a BA in General Studies from the University of Central Florida. Terrence has

stepped with ADIMU: Men of Excellence Step Team and is a co-founder, former president, and performer of the Hazard Step Team. He was inducted into the UCF Chapter of Progressive Black Men, Inc. in 2015. This is Terrence's second season with the Company.



CONRAD R. KELLY II is a native of Fort Lauderdale, FL, who studied Criminal Justice at Florida A&M University. During his time at FAMU, he performed with the Marching 100 and The

Strikers. Conrad later became a soloist for The Rolle Project in Las Vegas and a dance instructor at Studio 305, where he taught hip-hop, contemporary, and jazz. He has won numerous awards as a choreographer and dancer, including being a two-time recipient of the DC Commission on Arts and Humanities' prestigious Arts and Humanities Fellowship Program. A long-standing

member of the Company, Conrad serves as Step Afrika!'s Assistant Artistic Director and recently choreographed *The Movement*, an epic tribute to Black Lives Matter and the wave of activism in 2020. This is Conrad's eighth season with the Company.



JEMEEMA S. MONTROSE is a native of Brooklyn, NY. She attended ASA College, where she studied Health Information Technology. Jemeema is a proud

member of Swing Phi Swing Social Fellowship, Incorporated, and has served as the Chair Facilitator of the National Step and Stroll Committee. She has led performances on numerous college campuses across the country, and Jemeema has also served as a step coach for middle and high school students. This is Jemeema's first season with the Company.



ISAIAH O'CONNOR is a native of Miami, FL, with a BS in Biology from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University. A student of

hip-hop, modern, and urban soul, Isaiah has previously stepped with the Strikers Dance Troupe under the direction of Shepiro Hardemon. This is Isaiah's third season with the Company.



KEANU POWELL is a native of Decatur, GA, with a BBA in Management from Howard University. While at Howard, Keanu became an active member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., serving as

2nd Vice President and Step Master. He is also a member of Kappa Kappa Psi National Honorary Band Fraternity, Inc., through the Eta Omega Chapter, and served as Drum Major for the 2021-2023 seasons. Keanu was prominently featured on *Good Morning America* representing Howard University. He has also performed nationally with Howard's band at major events, including Nike Headquarters and the inaugural NBA HBCU Classic. This is Keanu's first season with the Company.

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Image of John Kani for *Kunene and the King* courtesy of the artist.



ERICKA STILL is a native of St. Petersburg, FL, with a BS in Health Science, Pre-Occupational Therapy, and a Minor in Rehabilitation Management from Florida A&M University. Ericka

previously stepped with AKAdemy Exquisite Gems and studied under the direction of Paulette W. Johnson and Shepiro Hardemon as a member and Co-Assistant Artistic Director of Mahogany Dance Theatre. This is Ericka's third season with the Company.



BRIE TURNER is a native of Lithonia, GA, with a BA in Strategic, Legal, and Management Communications from Howard University, where she graduated magna cum laude. She is a member

of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., serving as Chapter President, and she also pursued a minor in Theater Arts Administration. Brie served as both captain and co-captain of the Howard University Bisonettes Dance Ensemble and has dedicated over 10 years to technical dance training. This is Brie's third season with the Company.



JOSEPH VASQUEZ hails from Guttenberg, NJ, and has a BA in Exercise Science from Rutgers University in New Brunswick, NJ. In college, Joseph danced with the Rutgers Bachata Performance

Team, where he choreographed and led the team for four years. He is a member of Lambda Sigma Upsilon Latino Fraternity, Incorporated—the first Latin fraternity to step and stroll—and The Revels Stroll Team, where he was led by former team captains Francisco Pozo and Carlos Zapata. This is Joseph's third season with the Company.



PELHAM WARNER JR. is a native of the Bronx, NY, and holds a BA from Dutchess Community College. Pelham is a member of The Order of the Feather Fraternity, where he served as the team's

Step Master and captain for five years, and

he has previously danced with The Players Club Steppers. Pelham has worked as a dance instructor in the greater New York City area and recently performed in the a cappella musical *The Movement* by Kathy D. Harrison at The National Black Theater Festival. This is Pelham's sixth year with the Company.



ROBERT WARNSLEY is a native of Chicago, IL, with a BS in Information Technology from Illinois State University. A member of the Eta Tau chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Robert served as the step

and stroll master for four years and has organized, competed, and placed first in numerous step shows. He has partnered with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America to teach stepping, and he actively participates in community service projects in Chicago. Robert also studies, practices, and teaches dancehall and various Afro styles in the Chicagoland, DMV, and NYC areas. This is Robert's sixth season with the Company.



TRESHAWN WILLIAMS is a native of Davenport, IA, and holds a BFA in Dance from the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in Los Angeles. He was introduced to competitive stepping as a child through

Step with Soul (formerly Wayman AME Steppers), where he later became the first junior artistic director. TreShawn has trained extensively in ballet, jazz, and hip-hop, and has performed with Inspire Danz Company, the LA Sparks, and the Disney & Lego web series. He has choreographed for musicals, dance teams, and concerts, including Kanye West's Donda Choir. This is TreShawn's first season with the Company.

JEEDA BARRINGTON (*Special Guest DJ Nutcracker*) is a native of Glenarden, MD, and a graduate of Bowie State University where he earned his Bachelor's in Music Technology and Master's Degree in Human Resources. A member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., Jeeda has served as the choreographer for various traveling step and "partywalk" teams. He continues his love for rhythms through disc jockeying at events across the United States.

STEP AFRIKA! LEADERSHIP



C. BRIAN WILLIAMS

(Founder and Executive Producer) is a native of Houston, Texas, and a graduate of Howard University. Brian first learned to step as a

member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. – Beta Chapter, in the Spring of 1989. While living in Southern Africa, he began to research the percussive dance tradition of stepping, exploring the many sides of this exciting, yet under-recognized American art form, and founded Step Afrika! in 1994. Williams has performed, lectured, and taught in Europe, Central and South America, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Caribbean, and throughout the United States. Through Williams' leadership, stepping has evolved into one of America's newest cultural exports and inspired the designation of Step Afrika! as Washington, DC's official "Cultural Ambassador." In 2022, the National Endowment of the Arts designated Williams as a National Heritage Fellow, the nation's highest honor in folk and traditional arts. He is the recipient of numerous Artist Fellowships; the World Alive! Distinguished Artist Award by ArtsEmerson; the Mayor's Arts Award for Visionary Leadership from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities; Distinguished Arts Award from the Coalition for African Americans in the Performing Arts; and the Pola Nirenska Award for Contemporary Achievement in Dance. He is also featured in *Soulstepping*, the first book to document the history of stepping. He also earned the Mayor's Art Award for Innovation in the Arts and has led the company to multiple Metro DC Dance Awards for "Outstanding New Work," "Excellence in Stage Design/Multimedia," and "Outstanding Group

Performance." Williams has been cited as a "civic/community visionary" by *NV Magazine*, a "nation builder" by the National Black Caucus of State Legislators and a "minority business leader" by the *Washington Business Journal*. His work is featured prominently at the Smithsonian Museum of African-American History and Culture in Washington, DC.



LAMAR LOVELACE

(Executive Director)

is responsible for the organization's strategy and operations, leading its staff, programs, and the execution of its mission. Working closely with Step Afrika!'s board of directors, he spearheads fundraising, marketing, operations, and long-range planning for the organization. He brings deep expertise from academia and has managed the organization's humanities-based partnerships. In July 2017, Lamar joined Step Afrika! as Deputy Executive Director, where he oversaw the dance company's communications and marketing strategy, fundraising efforts, and financial operations. Previously, Lamar spent 8 years at Columbia University as Assistant Director in the Office of Community Outreach and Education and Director of Public Programs and Events. At the New York City-based campus, he managed community-based partnerships and special events and produced large-scale, humanities-based programming opportunities to engage students, faculty, and staff. At Broward College in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Lamar was Director of Cultural Affairs and Student Engagement, where he created arts-based social justice programs and exhibitions. He holds Master's degrees in Arts Management and Oral History from Carnegie Mellon and Columbia, respectively, and a BA in Speech and Hearing Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Lovelace is a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.



MFONISO AKPAN

(Artistic Director) has trained extensively in tap, ballet, jazz, modern, African dance, and step. While attending the State University of New York at Stony Brook, she

majoring in biochemistry and cultivated her stepping skills as a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Mfon began her training at the Bernice Johnson Cultural Arts Center and has performed at Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, the Apollo Theater, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and Lincoln Center. Mfon toured with the off-Broadway show *Hoopin' 2 Hittin'*, where she was a featured stepper and dancer.

ARENA STAGE LEADERSHIP

HANA S. SHARIF *(Artistic Director)* has enjoyed a multi-faceted theater career, including roles as an artistic leader, director, playwright, and producer with a specialty in strategic and cross-functional leadership. Hana began her professional career as an undergraduate student at Spelman College. From 1997 to 2003, Hana served as the co-founder and Artistic Director of Nasir Productions, a theater dedicated to underrepresented voices challenging traditional structure. Hana joined the Tony® Award-winning regional theater, Hartford Stage, in 2003. During her decade-long tenure at Hartford Stage, Hana served as the Associate Artistic Director, Director of New Play Development, and Artistic Producer. Hana launched the new play development program, expanded the community engagement and civic discourse initiatives, and developed and produced Tony®, Grammy, Pulitzer, and Obie Award-winning shows. Starting in 2012, she served as Program Manager at ArtsEmerson, a leading world theater company based at Boston's Emerson College. During her tenure at

ArtsEmerson, Hana launched an Artists in Residency program, led a research program assessing barriers to inclusion across the region, and leveraged her regional theater experience to freelance produce for smaller theater companies looking to expand and restructure their administrative teams. Hana was Baltimore Center Stage's Associate Artistic Director from 2014 to 2019 and was the architect of the innovative CS Digital program: a platform that pushes the boundaries of traditional theater and looks at the nexus point between art and technology. Her other achievements at Baltimore Center Stage included prototyping the Mobile Unit focused on historically underserved audiences, strengthening community engagement, producing multiple world and regional premieres, and helping to guide the theater through a multi-million dollar building renovation and rebranding effort. Hana became the first Black woman to lead a major regional theater in 2018 when she was named the Augustin Family Artistic Director of The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis. During her tenure at The Rep, Hana guided the organization through a strategic alignment, revolutionized the New Works program, expanding access to underserved communities, and centering equity and anti-racism as the organization's foundational values. Hana holds a BA from Spelman College and an MFA from the University of Houston. Hana is the recipient of USITT's 2023 Distinguished Achievement Award, Spelman's 2022 National Community Service Award, the 2009-10 Aetna New Voices Fellowship, EMC Arts Working Open Fellowship, and Theatre Communications Group (TCG) New Generations Fellowship. Hana is a founding member of The Black Theatre Commons (BTC). She serves on the board of directors for the TCG, BTC, and the Sprott Family Foundation.

EDGAR DOBIE (*Executive Producer*) Born in Vernon, British Columbia, a village next to the Rocky Mountains (three years after Arena had its first performance in 1950), I am one of five brothers raised by my Dad Edgar, a mechanic and small businessman, and Mom Connie, a telephone operator and union organizer. I am the only Dobie to make a career in theater. Luckily for me, drama was an arts elective I was offered at the tender age of 12 so I hung up my hockey skates and joined the drama class, led by teacher Paddy Malcolm and her fledgling Powerhouse Community Theater after school. By the time I graduated from high school, we volunteers had built ourselves a 200-seat, fully equipped theater on its own piece of land in the center of town and found a sold-out audience for the full season of plays we had on offer. That experience taught me so many lessons about the power of theater to foster collaboration and share meaningful

stories, as well as the public values that attach themselves to building a safe place where everyone is welcome. All those lessons served me well as a managing leader and producer both sides of the border and both sides of the commercial and non-profit theater divide. Arriving here in Southwest with my good wife Tracy and our daughter Greta Lee in 2009 makes me feel like I am well-equipped to do a good job for you all. I am honored to have been recognized for my service to, and leadership of, the Washington, D.C.-area theater community as a recipient of Theatre Washington's inaugural Victor Shargai Leadership Award in 2022.

Headshots of the Step Afrika! Company and Staff by Keith Major and Jati Lindsay.

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For more information, contact **Maya Weil, CAP®**, Arena's Gift Planning Specialist at 202-600-4158 or mweil@arenastage.org



(l-r) Brooke Ighibashi, Jane Lui, and Tim Lui in *Cambodian Rock Band* (2023/24 Season). Photo by Margot Schulman.

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Executive Producer Edgar Dobie
Founding Director Zelda Fichandler
(1924-2016)

Founding Executive
Director Thomas C. Fichandler
(1915-1997)

Artistic Director
Emeritus Molly Smith

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Senior Director, Artistic Strategy
and Impact Reggie D. White
Literary Manager Otis C. Ramsey-Zoe
Casting Director/Line Producer Raiyon Hunter
Artistic Associate Misy Singson
Artistic Fellow Abigail Thomas*
Current Commissioned Writers The Bengsons,
Lee Cataluna, Noah Diaz
Lady Dane Figueroa Edidi,
Emily Feldman, Idris Goodwin,
Caleen Sinnette Jennings, Deepak Kumar,
Taylor Mac, Octavio Solis, Vera Starbard,
Cheryl West, Lauren Yee,
Karen Zacarias, Zack Zadek

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Maintenance Assistant Tevin Smith
Porter Lawrence Wise
Building Technician Harvey Ceasar
Stage Door Attendant Kay Rogers
Environmental and Security Services SWBID

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Camp Programs Director Rebecca Campana
Community Engagement
Producer Tiffany Fulson

Learning Engagement
Managers Katie Campbell,
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Assistant Douglas Robinson
Senior Community
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School Programs
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Steve Han (Security),
Jarrett Poole (System Administrator)
IS Help Desk Eddie Wieland

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Communications Ashton Beck
Associate Director of Marketing &
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Marketing & Communications
Administrative Assistant Destiny King
Marketing and Media Fellow Danait Haddish*
Multimedia Design Fellow Jane Gerrard*

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Senior Production Manager Trevor A. Riley
Assistant Production
Manager Rachel Crawford

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Resident Production
Stage Manager Christi B. Spann

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Technical Director Travis Smith
Associate Technical Director Clare Cawley
Scene Shop Supervisor Frank Miller
Stage Supervisor Hannah Martin
Scenic Charge Artist Colleen Doty
Scenic Artist Misha Rodriguez
Carpenters Erick Boscana,
Matthew Grisdela, Julia Junghans,
Max Marshall, Logan McDowell, Lily Rehberg

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Associate Properties Director Jonathan Borgia
Head Props Artisan Niell DuVal
Props Artisan Kyle Handziak
Props Assistants Erica Feidelseit, Kayla Prough

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Assistant Lighting Supervisor Olivia Rudd
Electricians Scott Folsom, Kelsey Swanson
Nicole Trantum
Lighting Fellow Christian Henriquez*

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Assistant Sound and
Video Supervisor Lex Allenbaugh
Master Sound and
Video Technician Timothy M. Thompson
Sound Technicians Alexander Cloud,
Liv Farley, Kirubell Seyoum

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Associate Costume Director Cierra Coan
Drapers Seth Gilbert, Erika Krause
First Hands Michele Macadaeg,
Elizabeth Spilsbury
Craftsperson Deborah Nash
Wardrobe Supervisor Alice Hawfield
Wigs, Hair, and
Makeup Supervisor Jaime Bagley
Dressers Caitlin O'Brien, Sabrina Simmons

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Audience Services Isaac Evans
Sales Operations Specialist &
Executive Assistant Sabrina Zillinger

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Operations Caroline Hunt
Junior Tessitura & Ticketing
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Group Sales Coordinator Brandon Ferguson

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Bruce Perry, Ellie Pline, Zachary Radhuber
Additional Staff for
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Chris Courtney, Tristin Evans, Dalton Lamberth,
Kathy Ledger, Hayley McGuire, Julie Neuber
Frances Pepper, Melissa Lin Sturges

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Events & Rentals Coordinators Hiwot Hailu,
Jasmine Martin

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& Guest Experience Jody Barasch
Lead Bartender, Hospitality Erika Wallace
Lead Bartender, Operations Edwin Cortez
Bartenders Rachel Halili,
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They're made . . .*

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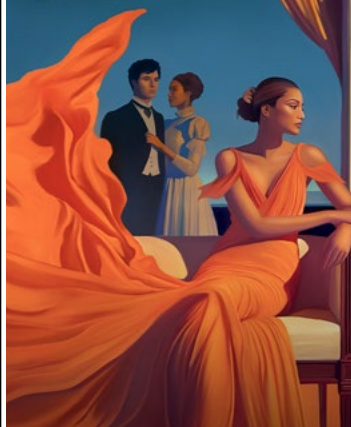
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