



# RENNIE HARRIS PUREMOVEMENT

## ROME & JEWELS

**DIRECTED, CHOREOGRAPHED, WRITTEN & CONCEIVED BY** Rennie Harris

**CO-WRITERS** Ozzie Jones, d. Sabela Grimes, Rodney Mason, Raphael Xavier

**DRAMATURG** Ozzie Jones

**ORIGINAL LIGHTING DESIGN** Pamela Hobson

**LIGHTING DESIGN** Andy Schmitz

**SOUND DESIGN & MUSICAL DIRECTION** Darrin Ross

**MUSIC** "Numb" by Portishead and "Leave It" by YES

**ORIGINAL VISUAL DESIGN** Howard Goldkranz

**VISUAL DESIGN** Will Bartlett

**CAST & DANCERS** Brandon Albright, James Colter, Joshua Culbreath, Philip Cuttino, Anthony Denaro, Miyeko Urvashi Rennie Harris, Joel Martinez, Rodney Mason, Fyness Mason, Emily Pietruszka, Jeremy Taylor, Julie Ulrich

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FRIDAY, **DECEMBER 9** @ 8 PM

SATURDAY, **DECEMBER 10** @ 2 PM

SATURDAY, **DECEMBER 10** @ 8 PM

Annenberg Center, Zellerbach Theatre

There will be no intermission.

**The Philadelphia Inquirer**

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Rennie Harris Puremovement's *Rome & Jewels* in the 22/23 season is made possible in part with support provided by the Penn Live Arts Accelerator Program at the University of Pennsylvania.

## PROGRAM NOTES

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When I was young, I saw *West Side Story* and immediately thought to myself, why aren't there street dancers in this movie? I re-imagined it with street dancers every time I watched the film. Little did I know, I'd grow up to become a choreographer. Some years later, around the mid to late 1990s, a thought popped into my mind: do a hip-hop version of *West Side Story*. Immediately, I began to create the work in my head and dreamt of it for weeks. By 1996-97, I started to set phrases on the company. Unbeknownst to the company, I secretly cast Duane Holland as Rome. I continued to work out ideas every day with no financial support or performance in sight.

Eventually Mark Murphy, the former presenter of On The Boards, caught wind of what I was doing and asked if I would present the workshop version of it at On The Boards Theater in Seattle, Washington. I agreed and presented a 45-minute workshop of *Rome & Jewels*. At this point, there were no monologues, it was purely dance. By 1998, I wrote the first draft of the script. It was a fusion of the original script of *Romeo and Juliet* mixed with colloquial language. One day before the start of rehearsal, Rodney Mason walked through the door and yelled aloud, "Yo Rome, thou art a villain, so what's up"?! And there you have it! Down goes Sonny Liston. It became clear to me we didn't really have to stay so exact. That night, I began re-writing the script and gave everyone updated scripts, but there was a problem. The dancers couldn't act. Well, not the way that would be believable. I then reached outside of the company for actors that could street dance and remembered a young man I worked with in the past by the name of d. Sabela Grimes. Next, I brought in a dramaturg who I knew as an accomplished director and rapper in Philadelphia, Ozzie Jones. At some point during the creation process, I hired Ozzie to play my version of the Tony character in *West Side Story*, "Old Man." The last change to the script came as a default decision but not in a negative way. d. Sabela Grimes and Rodney Mason were established poets and readers of Shakespeare and, as if ordained by Shakespeare himself, each of them began to fuse their poetry with dialogues and eventually wrote their own monologues. Ozzie Jones also wrote his own monologue, and the rest is history.

The title *Rome & Jewels* is an encoded jab at the hip-hop community. Rome = Roam, Jewels = jewelry. It means roaming for jewelry. In my opinion, the hip-hop community is always roaming, or rather searching, for the golden grail/money/riches, as if it were their only means of rising out of their current situation. Ozzie Jones's opening monologue explains it brilliantly. "Big and Pac roamed for jewels, but don't we all? You ain't nobody until you're somebody on some motherfucka's wall. One big, black, fat, and ugly, the other scarred up like tags on a train. Spitting freestyles for thirty Gs with pounds of weed on the brain. Now, here, heartbreak gets popped too while bullets crash through. Cause in the jungle sometimes what love got to do? When all your eyes are set on nothing you get tempted like David Ruffin. Cause in the death angel's arms, our screams sound like mumbling. Through Rome, we see Jewels, and Rome stands for quest to get love, props, or dough before he dies from the stress."

- Rennie Harris

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

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### **Lorenzo Rennie Harris** (Founder, Artistic Director, Choreographer and Director)

Dr. Lorenzo (Rennie) Harris was born and raised in an African American community in North Philadelphia. Since the age of 15, Harris has been teaching workshops and classes at universities around the country and is a powerful spokesperson for the significance of "street" origins in any dance style. In 1992, Harris founded Rennie Harris Puremovement, a street dance theatre company dedicated to preserving and disseminating street dance culture through workshops, classes, lectures, lecture demonstrations, residencies, mentoring programs and public performances. Coining the term street dance theatre and hip-hop concert dance, Harris founded his company based on the belief that hip-hop culture is the most important original expression of a new generation. With its roots in the inner-city African American and Latino communities, hip-hop can be characterized as a contemporary indigenous form, one that expresses universal themes that extend beyond racial, religious and economic boundaries, and one that (because of its pan-racial and transnational popularity) can help bridge these divisions. Harris' work encompasses the diverse and rich African American traditions of the past, while simultaneously presenting the voice of a new generation through its ever-evolving interpretations of dance. Harris is committed to providing audiences with a sincere view of the essence and spirit of hip-hop rather than the commercially exploited stereotypes portrayed by the media.

Currently, Harris tours a collection of evening-length works as well as classic repertory works of the last 30 years. *Rome & Jewels*, the first evening-length work written, choreographed and directed by Harris, uses Shakespeare's text to tell its own story based on *West Side Story* and *Romeo and Juliet*. To date, *Rome & Jewels* is the longest touring street dance theatre work in American history, with three Bessie Awards and four Black Theater Alvin Ailey Awards. It was also nominated for a Lawrence Olivier Award (UK) and received The Harman Shakespeare Theater Award for adaptation of *West Side Story* and *Romeo and Juliet*. *Rome & Jewels* has performed for sold-out audiences nationally and internationally. *The Philadelphia Inquirer* wrote of the work, "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... *Rome & Jewels* is clearly the work of an artist of uncommon vision...we get to witness, right here in our city, the evolution of an important new dance form."

In addition, Harris's body of work includes evening-length works such as *Falling Crumbs From the Cake*, *Something To Do With Love*, *Legends of Hip-hop*, *Facing Mekka*, *100NAKEDLOCKS*, *HEAVEN*, *LUV American-Style*, *Rennie Harris Funkedified*, *LIFTED* and two new works still in the creation and development phase, *American Street Dancer* and *Losing My Religion*. In *Facing Mekka*, Harris continues his quest to present street dance on the concert stage. To this end, he has developed a solo that challenges his own choreographic experiences and the audience's expectations of hip-hop and street dance. Harris approaches the vocabulary of this work, entitled *Lorenzo's Oil*, as a butoh-style hip-hop dance. The solo is meant to integrate calming, serene space (represented by the butoh style) with popping. *Lorenzo's Oil* turns street dance on its head in order to draw attention away from the spectacle and acrobatic and high-powered movements that many audiences, particularly those outside of hip-hop movement, expect and see what it could/should be. Harris found a way to marry his story with social dances and bring them to the concert stage, creating a cohesive dance style that finds a cogent voice in the theatre. Much of Harris' work has explored his personal experiences as an African American male growing up in North Philadelphia.

At the turn of the century alongside Princess Grace Kelly, Dr. and Julius Erving, Rennie Harris was voted one of the most influential people in the last one hundred years of Philadelphia history. He's been compared to twentieth-century legends, Basquiat, Alvin Ailey and Bob Fosse. In 2010, he received an honorary doctorate in the Arts and Humanities from Bates College (Maine) and a second honorary doctorate in the fine arts from Columbia College (Chicago). He received the Kulu Mele African Rooted Dance award and the Guggenheim (2010). He has also been featured in Rose Eichenbaum's *Masters of Movement-Portraits of America's Great Choreographers* with dance legends such as Carmen de

Lavallade, Judith Jamison, Fayard Nicolas and Gregory Hines. In addition, he was awarded a medal from the Kennedy Center (Washington, D.C.) as a master of African American Choreography. Touring Egypt, Jordan, Palestine and surrounding countries, Harris served as one of four Ambassadors for the United States as part of President Obama's cultural exchange program, Dance Motion USA, which was led by former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Recently, Rennie Harris became a recipient of The Doris Duke Artist Award (2020). He and his group of dancers and their infectious brand of movement have toured around the globe pioneering hip-hop dance theatre as a cogent and viable voice. Dr. Lorenzo "Rennie" Harris is atop the hip-hop heap, its leading ambassador.

#### **Rodney Mason** (Rome) \*Original Cast

Transplanted to Portland from South Philly, Mason is a song and dance man who won the starring role of Tony Sinclair for the Tanqueray worldwide campaign beating out the Wayans brothers and 800 candidates in the U.S. and UK for this sophisticated Black Brit. Mason has become a famous character in commercials, print/editorial, billboards and live guest appearances at major events. Mason has served his country and is a Gulf War Veteran. His experience defending his country as a Marine has colored his work and his performance message. He is also a theatre and performance artist, utilizing his street dance skills, spoken word poetry and rap to create many unusual and original characters for film, television, commercials and stand-up comedy appearances. Mason has worked with the Groundlings and Second City in Chicago and toured the world with Rennie Harris Puremovement as a core member. He is known for his award-winning role (Lawrence Olivier Award—Best Performance) in *Rome & Jewels*. Other stage work includes *Totem Road* with the Olive Dance Company and a stint with the Baltimore Outreach Program in *Yo Baltimore* where he received critical acclaim. His TV appearances include the MTV Vibe awards, hosting Comedy Central and cable TV.

#### **Philip Cuttino** (Ben V)

Cuttino, aka JiptheRuler, is a Philadelphia native hip-hopper from birth and is skilled in breakin', graffiti, DJ-ing and rapping. His first performance was at the age of four with his father, a prominent MC and B-Boy in the Philadelphia hip-hop scene. He started in a crew called the X-men doing local talent shows and learned from some of the Philadelphia greats. He has toured throughout the United States and internationally and is currently a core member of Rennie Harris Puremovement American Street Dance Theater.

#### **Joel Martinez** (Merc)

Martinez, aka Teknyc, was born and raised in Santurce, Puerto Rico until age 13. He credits an early interest in breaking, or breakdancing, to his older brother, Willie Martinez. As a B-boy, Martinez and his crew, Skill Methodz, became one of the most iconic crews in the street dance history. As a graffiti writer, Martinez is a proud member of one of the most legendary crews, Fame City Kings and Fast Breaking Artists. Martinez has painted murals worldwide, including NYC, Puerto Rico, Los Angeles, Paris, Japan, London, Amsterdam, Portugal, Dubai, Prague, Berlin, Argentina and Brazil. He is also a member of Rennie Harris Puremovement, appearing in *Rome & Jewels*, *Facing Mekka* and repertory works nationally and internationally. As a member of Rennie Harris Puremovement, he served as an ambassador of hip-hop for President Obama's Dance Motion USA that toured Israel, Egypt, Jerusalem, Palestine and other surrounding countries on behalf of the United States.

#### **Jeremy Taylor** (Dancer)

Born in Chicago, IL, Taylor is a freelance dance artist immersed deeply in street dance culture, kinesthetic movement and the African Diaspora. Upon receiving his BFA in dance in 2020 from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), Taylor relocated to Los Angeles to further elevate his career and art with his newly formed collective, Maverickz. He has danced with variety of artists such as Kaytranada, Young Thug, Kanye West, and as of late, performed at the 2022 BET Awards Show. Now, Taylor is exploring his newfound interest in becoming a dance historian by traveling to various regions inside and outside the U.S. to gain more clarity of the influence and advancements of both African and street dance styles.

### **Brandon Albright** (Tybault) \*Original Cast

Albright, aka Brother Peace, began his career in 1984 as a member of the famed Philadelphia-based popping group, The Scanner Boys (1980-1992). Working his way up in the industry as a B-boy and hip-hop dancer, he toured and danced for major recording artists such as the first gangster rapper Schooly D, Will Smith, Tuff Crew, Boyz II Men, LLCool J, Run DMC and the Beach Boys, to name a few. After his stint in the commercial entertainment industry, he performed, danced and directed for Rennie Harris Puremovement. In 2000, he founded Illstyle & Peace Productions, a multicultural Philadelphia-based dance company. His company creates work rooted in contemporary, West African, old-school and new-school hip-hop blended with an eclectic mix of disciplines, including breaking, popping, locking, tap, hip-hop and house dancing. Illstyle & Peace Productions has toured to critical acclaim nationally and internationally and is committed to delivering positive messages to all audiences. Illstyle & Peace Productions was a 2013 U.S. Culture Ambassador, chosen by the U.S. State Department and Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), and toured Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. As Artistic Director, Albright's most recent work for Illstyle, *Impossible IZZpossible*, with locking, popping, breaking, beatboxing, hip-hop, tap, modern, jazz, African dance, belly dance, singing and DJ'ing was presented at BAM and has been touring to critical acclaim. Albright also leads high-energy workshops, master classes and educational programs, including Become Your Dreams, a history of hip-hop; Hip-Hop Math, a math lecture demonstration program; and NO Bullying, STOP Bullying; Let's Be Friends!, an anti-bullying show. He is especially passionate about the universality of hip-hop and continues to seek inspiration from other dance forms and arts. His latest project for Illstyle is called *we dance to inspire*.

### **Ozzie Jones** (Old Man & Dramaturg) \*Original Cast

Born in West Philadelphia in 1970, Jones directed *The Countess Cathleen* by William Butler Yeats and composed the score for *Third and Indiana* by Steve Lopez for the Arden Theater Company. A representative for the Philadelphia Theater Initiative in the United States and Europe, he also became the first African American in the Republic of Ireland's history to direct a play in Ireland for an Irish theatre company, directing a production of *Othello* for Second Age Theater. David Nolan of the *Irish Times* called the production "the most creative and innovative production of Shakespeare seen in Ireland in decades." Ozzie "Old Man" Jones, along with Larry "Mr. Cismu" Fowler Jr. and Jared "Grand Agent" Taylor, started the hip-hop group, NAME. NAME went on to become one of the central figures in the Neo-Soul and underground hip-hop scene in Philadelphia, which produced stars like DJ Drama, Jill Scott, Musiq Soulchild and The Roots. The records released by NAME between 1995 and 2000 include *Mohammed Ali*, *Black Thought*, *Artist of the Year* (Featuring Poor Righteous Teachers and Schooly D), *Twelve*, *Logic* and *By Design* by Grand Agent featuring Jones. NAME toured throughout the United States and Canada. In 2000, Jones became the Producing Artistic Director of the Walt Whitman Arts Center in Camden, NJ, until 2007. Currently, Jones is developing an extensive series of plays about jazz called *The Real Book*. He has directed staged readings for *Chasin' the Bird* and *Kind of Blue*. Jones has just completed writing a road gang and cotton field hollers opera called, *Gwine Dig a Hole*, and recently starred in the 2021 film *Hail Mary*, which was written and directed by Nnamdi Kanga.

### **Joshua Culbreath** (Dancer)

Culbreath, aka Supa Josh, was born and raised in Philadelphia, where he started dancing at the age of 10. During his middle school years, Culbreath joined a dance group called K.R.S. Ent., which won many talent shows and went on to perform on the TV show *Showtime at the Apollo* in New York. While dancing with K.R.S. Ent., Culbreath met B-boy Hannibal, owner and artistic director of 360 Flava, and began to train with him. Culbreath is currently a core member of Rennie Harris Puremovement.

### **Emily Pietruszka** (Dancer)

Pietruszka, aka Lady Em, is a Colorado native currently residing in NYC. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts (magna cum laude) from the University of Colorado at Boulder. Pietruszka began her street styles training as a core member of Rennie Harris Grassroots Project in Denver, CO in 2015. She has been teaching in various contexts since graduation, ranging from the Front Range Community College of Thornton, CO to assistant teaching at the Ailey School in NYC. Pietruszka is honored to have the opportunity to perform

with RHPM and is excited to continue on her journey of taking risks as a movement artist and forever student.

**Anthony Denaro** (Dancer)

Denaro, aka B-boy YNOT M.F.A, explores the design, sustainability, history and community of hip-hop. Through a futurist lens, Denaro's work manifests in dance, typography, music and architecture. Denaro's reputation in the dance world precedes him. As a B-boy, he's traveled the world extensively, judging battles, teaching workshops and building cultural awareness. In Denaro's vision of the sustainability of hip-hop, teaching and mentorship are paramount. Currently, he teaches workshops internationally, as well as virtually and in person through the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Arizona State University and Texas Tech, where he facilitates breaking technique, stylized letterform design and sound design for electronic music production. Alongside his dance and professorship, Denaro creates two- and three-dimensional visual works (physical and digital) that construct a possible future of the hip-hop aesthetic.

**Julie Urich** (Dancer) \*Original Cast

Urich, aka Lady Jules, was born in St. Paul, Minnesota and raised in Boulder, Colorado. She can't remember a time when she didn't dance, though she started her formal dance training at a relatively late age taking jazz and ballet classes when she was 16. She quickly mastered the art of breaking and made quite a name for herself in the dance community. With an amazing career as a professional dancer under her belt, as well as being one of the most decorated female break-dancers in the world, Urich set her sights on the acting world. She starred in a feature film called *B-GIRL*, as well as other film projects and stage shows. Some of her highlights include appearing on the Oprah Winfrey show as well as performing alongside Madonna and Sarah Jessica Parker in consecutive Gap campaigns. She has also been featured in several other commercial campaigns such as Coke, iPod, Wal-Mart, Nike and Jolly Rancher. Along with ad campaigns, Urich has performed on several live stages around the world. The Victory Theatre on Broadway, the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. and the Spoleto Festival in Spoleto, Italy, are just a few of the prestigious theatres at which she feels privileged to have danced. Some of her other highlights include competing on MTV's *Americas Best Dance Crew* with the BEAT FREAKS, working with legendary hip-hop performing group, the Groovaloos, and several other television and movie credits, including *Step Up 2*, *You Got Served* and *So You Think You Can Dance*. She has also performed alongside such artists as Miley Cyrus, Jennifer Lopez, Christina Aguilera, Fergie, Pink, Missy Elliot, Run-DMC, LL Cool J. and Madonna, to name just a few. Urich is now studying for her bachelor's in psychology with an aspiration for her doctorate in sports psychology. She has a beautiful daughter named Izzy, who is the center of her life stage and light of her life!

**James Colter** (Dancer) \*Original Cast

Colter, aka Cricket, is a professional street dancer who has performed, taught and lectured on the form internationally for over 22 years. In addition, he is a well-versed visual artist (sequential art, children's book illustrations, etc.) choreographer and artistic director. Colter has taught globally at numerous hip-hop dance festivals, including Bates Dance Festival and the Illadelph Legends Festival. Colter was a featured dancer in the Disney movie *Step Up 2: The Street* and has danced for various recording artists including Boyz II Men, KRS-1, Will Smith, Eve, Avril Lavigne and Fall Out Boy, and was a host MTV Japan's *Dreamers* television show. Colter has worked with the legendary street dance pioneer Bill "Crutch Master" Shannon, urban tap dancer Tamango Van Cayseeleas and London's best-known urban theatrical wordsmith and curator, Jonzi D. Cricket. He has produced and directed various dance pieces in Philadelphia, New York City and London, including *Heroes*, a London-based hip-hop theatre show where he acted as director and principal costume designer. Colter is a part of the Step-Fenz dance crew, a NY-based dance group, that is known for its mix of B-boy and house dance. He is a founding member of Rennie Harris Puremovement (RHPM) and has worked with the company for over 16 years. He is an original cast member of Rennie Harris' Bessie award-winning multidisciplinary hip-hop theatre piece, *Rome & Jewels*. During his time with RHPM, Colter was involved in teaching and performing throughout the globe and was the leader of Puremovement's educational outreach program. Colter's artistic mission is to push the limits of the various movements that exist in hip-hop and other contemporary dance forms by blending



various art forms in order to tell a viable story on the concert dance stage and rid the stigma that hip-hop is merely an athletic form of dance that can only be performed in a showcase setting. Colter believes that, through hip-hop, complex stories can be told and the boundaries of theatre can be pushed by adding the urban/hip-hop aesthetic to costume design, set design, soundscapes, etc. Colter has recently founded his own company, Concept Kinetics, to accomplish his goal.

### **Miyeko Urvashi Rennie Harris** (Dancer)

Harris was born in Philadelphia and began training at the age of eight in Austin, TX. She later returned to Philadelphia and began her pre-professional training at the Koresh School of Dance, where she trained under Melissa Rector, Roni Koresh and Eva Szabo. Harris performed with Koresh Youth Ensemble for three years. Most recently, she performed with Maura Townsend Dance at the 2022 Los Angeles Dance Festival at the Luckman Theatre. Harris is a recent high school graduate and will be attending the California State University of Los Angeles with a major in communication disorders. She is excited to be performing with Rennie Harris Puremovement and looks forward to this next chapter in her life.

### **Evil Tracy The International Showoff** (DJ) \*Original DJ

Tracy started under a local Philly legend, DJ Grand Master Ant, who used to rock house and block parties back in 1981. Ant would let Tracy and a friend carry crates and rap with his legendary Philly group, Fatal Funk Force. Eventually, Tracy began DJing under his cousin DJ Kid Swift and later founded Action Figure Crew, which included his cousins DJ Kid Swift, DJ Aktive, and DJ Ghetto (Battle Champions), along with other legendary Philly DJs. Tracy is in video and television programs such as *Street Soldierz* by *On The Go Magazine* and the *Tru Heads* movie, which premiered on HBO, BET and The Avenue. He has opened for several artists, including Busta Rhymes and Raekwon the Chef of Wu-Tang Clan. Tracy has toured with Lyfe Jennings and did a couple of shows behind Melanie Fiona. He has also toured with Rennie Harris Puremovement on three award-winning productions: *Rome & Jewels*, *Illadelph Legends* and *Facing Mekka*, all of which are internationally acclaimed. Tracy was able to showcase his talents on Broadway and London's West End. He was the star DJ for Illstyle & Peace Productions' *Hit the Breaks*, a B-boy and tap dance show. Additionally, he has performed in the internationally acclaimed Steve Love production of *Break! The Urban Funk Spectacular*. Tracy is also the creator of his show *Needle To Da'Groove*, which toured briefly to three U.S. cities.

### **DJ Razor Ramon** (DJ)

DJ Razor Ramon is a DJ/turntablist/producer from Philadelphia. He has been in the Philly hip-hop scene for over 30 years and has been influenced by DJs such as Grandmaster Flash, Grandmixer D.XT., the late Jam Master Jay, DJ Jazzy Jeff and DJ Cash Money. The award-winning turntablist is the 2001 *Philadelphia City Paper* Pitch Control DJ Battle Champion, as well as the 2002 NBA All-Star Weekend DJ Battle Champion and the seven-time Power 99FM (Clear Channel) DJ Battle Champion. Ramon has also performed on stages throughout the U.S. and internationally. Ramon has performed with artists and poets such as Ursula Rucker, Mo Beasley and Rich Medina, hip-hop artists Grand Agent, Kenny Muhammad The Human Orchestra, Poor Righteous Teachers, DJ Cash Money, Supernatural, Medusa, Hezekiah, Boogaloo Sam (the creator of popping and boogaloo) & The Electric Boogaloos, the late Don Campbell (the creator of Campbell Locking), Crazy Legs and Pop Master Fabel. Ramon has also performed with The Rock Steady Crew, Illstyle & Peace Productions, Danse4Nia Repertory Ensemble and Rennie Harris Puremovement. Ramon was part of one of the first hip-hop acts, Rennie Harris Hip-Hop Legends, to perform at the Kimmel Center. He has commercially recorded music with Grand Agent, Mel Ink, Shawn Kelly, Boyz II Men, Wort Und Totschlag (W.U.T.-German Hip Hop Artists) and NFL Films. He also released two solo albums entitled *Introducing the Turntablistic DJ Razor Ramon* and *For Beats Sake Volume I*. Ramon is the recipient of the 2003 Philly DJ Appreciation Award for his years of dedicated service, and he continues to create music, perform in theatres, clubs and lounges throughout Philadelphia and abroad, displaying his skills and passion for the art of turntablism.

**Pamela Hobson** (Lighting Designer) \*Original Lighting Designer

Hobson began her career at Howard University in 1982 in Washington, D.C. and is the original lighting designer for *Rome & Jewels* and other repertory works. She was also the road manager for Rennie Harris Puremovement as well Lejá Dance Company, Patti LaBelle, *INVINCIBLE: A Glorious Tribute to Michael Jackson* (created, produced and directed by Darrin Ross for RossLive Entertainment,) The Boys Choir of Harlem and many other artists and companies. Hobson is the founder and director of Into The Light Productions in 1996 and is a veteran lighting designer who has shaped the industry for over 25 years.

**Andy Schmitz** (Lighting Designer)

Schmitz is a circus rigger with over 25 years of entertainment industry experience as a project manager, head rigger, technical director, lighting director and production manager. Schmitz worked his way up to Head of Rigging on Cirque du Soleil's *Kooza* while touring over 20 cities on three continents before he moved back to Las Vegas to start a family. Schmitz has rigged with the Vegas Cirque du Soleil shows *O* and *Ka* and served as the Assistant Head of Rigging at *Le Reve*. Prior to his circus career, Schmitz was a freelance technical director based in Philadelphia, where he had the pleasure of acting as technical director for the Philadelphia Fringe Festival, worked with the world-class team at Sapsis Rigging and was the Production Manager for Rennie Harris Puremovement's Bessie award-winning hip-hop ballet, *Rome & Jewels*. Schmitz holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in theatre and dance from Alma College and is an Entertainment Technician Certification Program certified Rigger and a proud member of the International

**Donald Miller** (Costume Designer)

Miller is a premiere clothing designer in Philadelphia. He is also a Certified Public Accountant with a Bachelor's of Science degree from Xavier University of Louisiana. He is the founder of Rock Paper Denim 1970, an inspirational apparel brand with an upscale urban prep look that is rooted in the music and culture of the 70s. The distressed but polished aesthetic portrays the grit and grunt that the grind unselfishly gives along the journey. The mission of the company is to inspire people with a message of hope expressed through style and story. Rock Paper Denim is mainly an athletic casual brand with a range of unique clothing styles. [rockpaperdenim.com](http://rockpaperdenim.com).

**Darrin Ross** (Sound Designer/Composer) \*Original Sound Designer/Composer

Ross recently completed the score and soundscape for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's first two-act ballet, *Lazarus*. Ross has been collaborating with Rennie Harris for over 35 years. He started by producing and engineering songs with Jam On Productions in 1984 which led to various television and record productions. Eventually, Ross founded I.Q. Records and did sound design and composition for Suzan Lori Parks' *TopDog/Underdog*. Ross has received numerous grants for his works from the Rockefeller Foundation, Ford Foundation, Meet The Composer, Dance Advance and the Gross Foundation. He is the recipient of a 2001 New York Dance & Performance Award (Bessie) for his music composition and soundscape for *Rome & Jewels*. Ross has worked with many established artists in the industry, such as Jazzy Jeff, Newcleus, Doug E. Fresh, Freeway, Kim Waters, The Roots, Bahamadia, Todd Terry, Joanna Gardner, The Intruders, Mike Knox and many more. His sound design and composition credits include Rennie Harris *Funkedified*, Rennie Harris *LIFTED*, *HEAVEN*, *Facing Mekka*, *Rome & Jewels*, *LOW*, *Prince Scarecrow's Road To The Emerald City*, The Kimmel Center Presents, *PHILADANCO: The Philadelphia Experience*, *Same Spirit Different Movement*, *Impossible Izz Possible*, *Evolution*, *Champions of the Dance*, *BREAK! The Urban Funk Spectacular*, *King Michael*, *Fallen Crumbs from the Cake*, *Cool Heat Urban Beat*, *BREAK! and Skate*, The Pennsylvania Ballet, The Memphis Ballet, The Colorado Ballet, *Hot Mouth*, R.H.A.W Love American Style, Maurice Hines' *Hot Feet*, The Kennedy Center Honors, *Carols in Color*, *We Dance to Inspire* and numerous dance theatre works. Ross is the president of RossLive Entertainment. He is currently touring his production *Invincible: A Glorious Tribute to Michael Jackson* and scoring an upcoming TV drama called *the N.C.*



**Will Bartlett** (Visual Design)

The son of a fine artist and a past database architect, Bartlett was raised in West Philadelphia to believe in the unknown, the magical and unfathomable. Throughout his life, Bartlett has possessed a strong work ethic, coupled with a childlike playfulness that drives his discovery of his talents and creative desires. Bartlett has worked in a wide range of industries over the years, climbing rung by rung every time. From scenic design, to songwriting, to software development or cyber security solutions, Bartlett's experience and depth is expansive. With over 15 years in the entertainment industry, designing, producing and performing in a variety of artistic pursuits and 11 years at Apple, architecting and developing groundbreaking solutions, he has a unique background that has shaped what he wants to offer to the world. Bartlett founded The Yes Collective, an arts and tech LLC, that bridges his love of the arts and technology, merging the complexity of engineering problems, the beauty of human emotions and the spectacle of performance. Bartlett is dedicated to creating the unbelievable and showing the world what it's going to look like in the future.

**Rodney Hill** (Company Manager)

Born and raised in North Philadelphia, Hill entered the hip-hop scene in 1988. For more than a decade, Hill has blazed the stages in venues, nationally and abroad. He has been featured in many videos for artists such as Boyz II Men, Will Smith and Music Soul Child. He has performed on TV shows such as *LA R&B Divas*, NBC's *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, *Soul Train*, NBC's *NFL Under The Helmet* and *BET Teen Summit*. In addition, he has toured and performed with R&B singer Brave Williams, R&B singer Julian King, EVE, Teddy Pendergrass, Shanice Wilson, Mary J. Blige, 50 Cent and Philly's own, The Roots. An accomplished teacher and choreographer, Hill has had the opportunity to perform and teach at universities and dance studios, locally, nationally and internationally, including France, the Democratic Republic of Congo, East Asia, Egypt, Israel and Palestine. Constantly expanding his horizons, Hill is always working with new artists and exploring new opportunities. Currently, he is Company Manager/Director of Rennie Harris Puremovement and Rennie Harris R.H.A.W. Hill seeks inspiration from his community and family while continuing to educate and inspire others through his hard work, dedication and commitment to hip-hop and its culture.