



STEP AFRIKA!

30TH ANNIVERSARY

GALA

JUNE 4, 2024

ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

C. Brian Williams
Founder and Executive Producer

Lamar Lovelace
Executive Director

Mfoniso Akpan
Artistic Director

Artis J. Olds
Director of Arts Education and Community Programs

Margo Cunningham
Marketing Manager

STEP AFRIKA! ARTISTS

Conrad Kelly II
Assistant Artistic Director

Kenneth L. Alexander

Jerod Coleman

Nya Christian

Ariel Dykes

Keomi Givens Jr.

Kamala Hargrove

Nepri James

Terrence Johnson

Isaiah O'Connor

Na'imah Ray

Valencia Springer

Ericka Still

Brie Turner

Joseph Vasquez

Pelham Warner Jr.

Robert Warnsley



STEP AFRIKA! 30TH ANNIVERSARY GALA SPONSORS

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- Conrad Woody

Special thanks to our generous in-kind sponsors: Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater, Uncle Nearest, and Tito's



OUR MISSION

Step Afrika!'s mission is to preserve, expand and promote an appreciation for stepping through professional performances and to educate, motivate and inspire young people in and out of school through arts education programs that emphasize teamwork, commitment, and discipline.

OUR VISION

As the foremost authority on the tradition of stepping, Step Afrika! aims to expand its global influence and introduce this uniquely American art form to diverse communities worldwide.



OUR 30TH ANNIVERSARY GALA

WILL SUPPORT STEP AFRIKA!'S TWO-WEEK TOUR OF SOUTH AFRICA IN AUGUST 2024.

Celebrating the Company's milestone and South Africa's 30th independence anniversary, the primary focus will be artistic collaboration, workshops, and performances in Soweto, Johannesburg, where Step Afrika! began in December 1994.

THANK YOU!

STEP AFRIKA!'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY GALA CHAIR **BRANDON TODD**

Brandon Todd serves as Sr. Director of Corporate Public Policy for Washington Gas (WGL). Brandon leads the government affairs and public policy group, collaborating with senior leadership to shape and manage policy positions. With six years prior experience on the Council of the District of Columbia representing Ward 4, Brandon brings extensive expertise in political management, public policy, and government affairs. With over 13 years of experience in D.C. Government, he is an accomplished community leader serving on various boards, including the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, Step Afrika!, and The University of District Columbia Foundation Board.



ORDER OF FESTIVITIES

6p

**VIP Cocktail
Reception**

7p

**Program and
Performances**

8p

**Dinner, Dessert,
and Dancing**

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Congratulations *Step Afrika! 30th Anniversary*

June 4, 2024

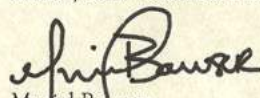
As Mayor of Washington, DC, it is my pleasure congratulate Step Afrika! on the occasion of your 30th Anniversary Gala.

Since its founding in 1994, Step Afrika! has been at the forefront of expanding appreciation for the art of "stepping," the dynamic, percussive dance tradition with historic roots in African American fraternities and sororities.

Your upcoming collaboration and performance tour to Soweto and other South African sites underscores your devotion to African dance and to fostering global connections.

I am especially grateful that you have made "stepping" one of our leading cultural exports and for your outreach to youth through shows, summer camps, and more. Residents of the District of Columbia have benefited greatly from your work.

On behalf of the nearly 700,000 residents of Washington, DC, I offer my heartfelt thanks for your vital cultural contributions and my best wishes for a memorable anniversary celebration.


Muriel Bowser
Mayor, Washington, DC



STEP AFRIKA! 30TH ANNIVERSARY GALA ORDER OF PROGRAM

VIDEO

"Step Afrika! in 3 Minutes"

PERFORMANCE

"Zulu"

EVENING WELCOME

Tameka Harris Live

STEP AFRIKA! BOARD CHAIR

Conrad Woody, Jr.

STEP AFRIKA! BOARD VICE CHAIR

Kym Taylor

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Mfon Akpan

VIDEO

"Story of Step Afrika!"

PERFORMANCE

"Wade" feat. Smokie Norful

30TH ANNIVERSARY GALA CHAIR

Brandon Todd

PERFORMANCE

"I Need You Now" feat. Smokie Norful

FUNDRAISING APPEAL

Tameka Harris

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Lamar Lovelace

SPECIAL PERFORMANCE

FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

C. Brian Williams

VIDEO

"Step Afrika! Promotional Video"

PERFORMANCE

"Stepping"

SPECIAL GUESTS



EMCEE

TAMEKA HARRIS LIVE

TAMEKA HARRIS LIVE, known offstage as Tameka J. Harris, has been a shining star in the entertainment realm for over four dynamic decades, and her journey shows no signs of slowing down. A versatile artist with a myriad of talents, Tameka captivates audiences with her genuine charisma and unwavering integrity. Rooted in her deep faith in God, she is driven by a desire to use her platform for meaningful, positive impact. With a seamless fusion of professionalism, intellect, and boundless energy, Tameka is on a mission to redefine the entertainment industry. Her unique contributions breathe new life into every performance, leaving a lasting impression on all who have the pleasure of experiencing her artistry.



SMOKIE NORFUL

Renowned recording artist, educator, author, and visionary pastor, Smokie Norful has left an indelible mark in the realms of music and education over his illustrious two-decade career. With over 25 years of experience, Norful's musical prowess has led to five Number 1 Billboard albums and over 4 million albums sold globally, earning him prestigious accolades including 2 Grammy Awards, 11 Stellar Awards, 5 Dove Awards, 1 Soul Train Music Award, 2 NAACP Image Award nominations, and 3 BET Award nominations. As a Pastor for over 18 years, Norful's profound influence extends beyond his musical achievements, as he's also celebrated for his spiritual guidance and dedication to his community. Additionally, he's recognized as an accomplished author and dedicated educator. As a proud member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., his commitment to community impact and social engagement reflects his ethos of service and compassion.



DJ TANZ

DJ Tanz has performed at events all over the country, including The NAACP Convention, Capital Jazz Super Cruise, BET Honors, CIAA, Associated Black Charities, and a multitude of festivals and events. DJ Tanz has also hosted a national weekly show on Sirius FM and various mix-shows on Baltimore's 92Q and Magic 95.9 radio stations. Seeing people have a great time that drives DJ Tanz. He is known to play a wide variety of music seamlessly in each of his sets, ensuring that everyone will want to move. That's his motto... "You Will Dance!"



THE WAVE

The Wave is the ultimate variety dance and party band and, as their name suggests, with a contemporary edge! Brandon, the main male lead singer, competed on NBC's The Voice and got three of four judges to turn their chairs around; Adam Levine, Miley Cyrus, and Jennifer Hudson! Bridget, the female lead singer, performed several times with John Legend on ABC's Duets. She also toured internationally and sang in the film, The Sin Seer.



CREATIVE TEAM



C. BRIAN WILLIAMS

Founder and Executive Producer

C. Brian Williams 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 Arts Emerson; 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

As Executive Director for Step Afrika!, Lamar Lovelace 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

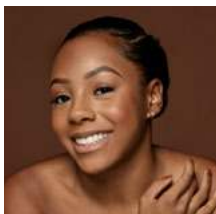
Mfoniso Akpan has trained extensively in tap, ballet, jazz, modern, African dance, and step. While attending the State University of New York at Stony Brook, she majored in biochemistry and cultivated her stepping skills as a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Mfon began her training at the Bernice 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 *Hoofin' 2 Hittin'*, where she was a featured stepper and dancer.

COMPANY



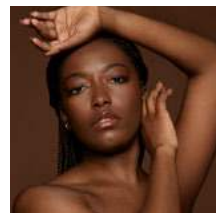
KENNETH L. ALEXANDER is a native of Savannah, GA with a BFA in Interior Design from Valdosta State University. First introduced to stepping through the Sigma Beta Club, Kenneth went on to become a proud member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc. He has taught and performed in and around Tampa Bay, FL, and most recently had the honor of performing at the Super Bowl LV Halftime Show. This is Kenneth's first season with the Company.



NYA CHRISTIAN is a native of Cleveland, OH with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, Sociology and Dance Arts from Howard University. A member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, she has served as the Alpha Chapter Parliamentarian, Step Mistress, and Stroll Captain. Nya has choreographed works for Taste of Howard, the White House Initiative on HBCU Step performance, Howard University's 2022 Homecoming Step Show performance, DC-based Black history month performances, and the 2023 North Atlantic Regional Step Show's winning number. She has also represented the Howard University National Panhellenic Council and her Sorority on Good Morning America for "The story of 9 historically Black fraternities and sororities" segment during Black History Month. This is Nya's first season with the Company.



JEROD COLEMAN is a native of Columbus, GA with a BA in History from the University of South Alabama. A member of the Theta Delta chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., he has served as both step and stroll master. Jerod has performed with the Atlanta Braves, Atlanta Falcons, Redbull Dance Your Style, and DreamHack ATL entertainment teams. He taught at Thomas H. Brewer Elementary School in Columbus, Georgia, where he also ran an all-boys step team called the B.L.U.E. Steppers. This is Jerod's first season with the Company.



ARIEL DYKES is a native of Gainesville, FL with an Associate of Arts Degree in Musical Theatre from Santa Fe College and a BFA in Dance from the University of Florida. Ariel was introduced to stepping and strolling as a member of the Iota Lambda Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., where she choreographed step routines for the chapter and UF's National Panhellenic Council. She has trained in traditional and post-modern dance, jazz, voice, and acting, and has worked with such artists as Ailey Dancers' Nathaniel Hunt and Samantha Barriento, Tony Award winner Scott Coulter, and Galen Hooks. This is Ariel's second season with the Company.



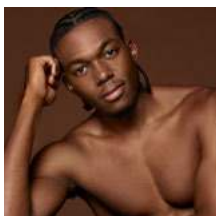
KEOMI GIVENS JR. is a native of Miami FL where he trained with Ricardo Dume, Traci Young-Byron, Jakari Sherman, Conrad Kelly II, Tanisha Cidel, Maribel Trujillo, and Robert Battle. He has studied at the New World School of the Arts and The Mahogany Dance Theatre, where he served as a Rehearsal Director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



KAMALA HARGROVE is a native of the Bronx, NY, with a BA in Mathematics, Theater, and Dance from Trinity College. Kamala studied with the Alvin Ailey School and Dance Theater of Harlem, 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, teaching elementary, middle, and high school students. This is Kamala's second season with the Company.



NEPRI JAMES is a native of Atlanta, GA with a BA from North Carolina A&T State University. Step Master for her Alpha Phi Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., she is known for bringing her step team to victory at the 2018 Homecoming Step Show. Nepri has worked for the Thurgood Marshall College Fund Rise and Contra Tiempo and has previously toured nationally with Step Afrika! as a guest artist. This is Nepri's first season with the Company as a full-time artist.



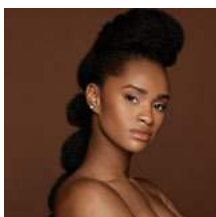
TERRENCE JOHNSON is a native of Broward County, FL with a BA in General Studies from the University of Central Florida. Terrence has previously stepped with the ADIMU: Men of Excellence Step Team, and served as a co-founder, president, and performer with the Hazard Step Team. He is also a 2015 inductee of the UCF Chapter of Progressive Black Men, Inc. This is Terrence's first season with the company as a full-time artist.



CONRAD R. KELLY II is a native of Fort Lauderdale, FL who studied Criminal Justice at Florida A&M University. Following his time with A&M's Marching 100 and The Strikers, Conrad became a soloist for The Rolle Project in Las Vegas and a dance instructor with Studio 305, where he regularly taught classes in hip-hop, contemporary, and jazz. Conrad has won numerous awards as a choreographer and dancer, and is namely 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 most recently choreographed *The Movement*, an epic tribute to Black Lives Matter and the domino effect of activism experienced in 2020. This Conrad's seventh season with the Company.



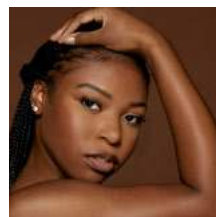
ISAIAH O'CONNOR is a native of Miami, FL with a BS in Biology from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University. A student of hip-hop, modern, and urban soul, Isaiah has previously stepped with the Strikers Dance Troupe under the direction of Shepiro Hardemon. This is Isaiah's second season with the Company.



NA'IMAH RAY is a native of Brooklyn, NY with a BFA in Dance from Montclair State University. Na'imah performed as a Centennial Stepper with her sorority, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Incorporated, at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. She has trained with Dwana Smallwood, Earl Mosley, Christian Von Howard, and Beatrice Capote, and participated in dance programs at The Ailey School and Earl Mosley Institute of the Arts. This is her second season with the Company.



VALENCIA ODEYKA EMONNI SPRINGER is a native of Brooklyn, NY with a BA in Elementary Education from Virginia Union University. Valencia is a proud member of the Nu Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc. and the Eta Psi Chapter of Tau Beta Sigma National Honorary band sorority and served as the first "Stand Queen" (captain) with the Ambassadors of Sound Marching Band. Previously a student of Restoration Youth Arts Academy, Valencia has performed with Forces of Nature, Dance Africa (Brooklyn), and as part of a live installation entitled "A Primordial Place." She has also worked as a social studies and science teacher, dance teacher/coach, guest choreographer for local New York/ Virginia majorette teams, and as a model for New York and Richmond, Virginia, fashion weeks. This is Valencia's fifth season with the Company.



ERICKA STILL is a native of St. Petersburg, FL with a BA in Health Science, Pre-Occupational Therapy, and 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 second season with the Company.



BRIE TURNER is a native of Lithonia, GA with a BA in Strategic, Legal, and Management Communications from Howard University's Cathy Hughes School of Communications where she graduated magna cum laude. As an exceptional dancer, choreographer, and communications professional, Brie's unwavering dedication to her craft has propelled her to great heights in her knowledge of performing arts. She has dedicated over 10 years to technical dance training, shaping her into a versatile and well-rounded dancer. During her undergraduate career at Howard, Brie became a member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc., where she served as president and her passion for stepping was nurtured. Additionally pursuing a minor in Theater Arts Administration, she rose to captain and co-captain roles in the Howard University Bisonettes Dance Ensemble. In her second season with the company, Brie is excited to continue bringing life to African diasporic stories and dance styles.



JOSEPH VASQUEZ is a native of Guttenberg, NJ with a BS in Exercise Science from Rutgers University in New Brunswick where he served as a member of Lambda Sigma Upsilon Latino Fraternity Incorporated. Joseph has led and choreographed for the Bachata Performance Team, and previously performed with The Revels, a stroll team led by Francisco Pozo and Carlos Zapata. This is Joseph's second season with the Company.



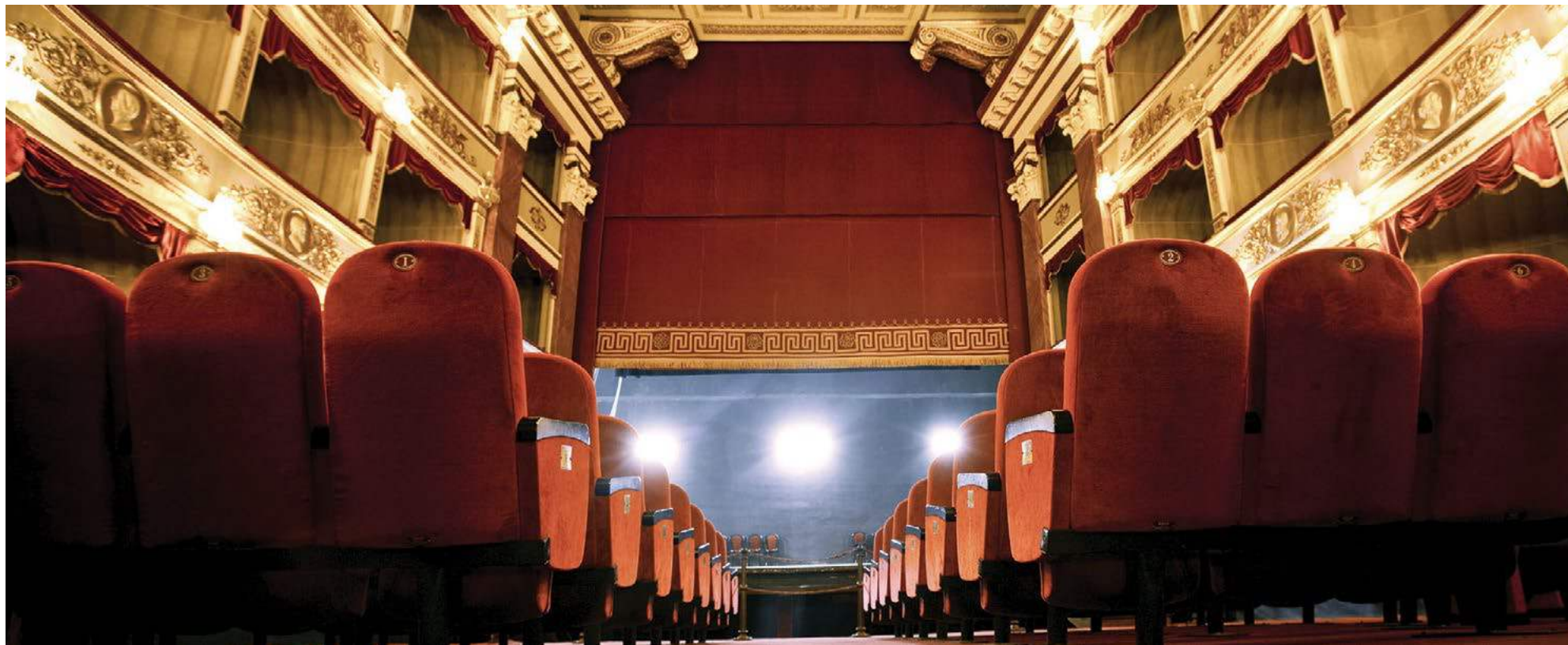
PELHAM WARNER JR. is a native of The Bronx, NY and has a BA from Dutchess Community College. Pelham is a member of The Order of the Feather Fraternity where he served as the team's Step Master and captain for five years, and has previously danced with The Players Club Steppers. Pelham has worked as a dance instructor in the greater New York City area, and recently performed in the a capella musical *The Movement* by Kathy D. Harrison at The National Black Theater Festival. This is Pelham's fifth 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 and has organized, competed in, and placed first in numerous step shows. He has taught stepping to the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, and actively participates in community service projects in the city of Chicago, teaching dancehall and various Afro styles in the DMV and NYC areas. This is Robert's fifth season with the Company.



ENJOY THE SHOW!



Thank you for making a difference

Every day, devoted volunteers in our town give amazing gifts of resources and time to help our neighbors grow stronger.

We offer our support to Step Afrika! for their unlimited spirit and contribution to their 30th Anniversary Gala. It's this heartfelt connection that can make a difference in our community and beyond.

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Artists and performers fuel our imagination, inspiring us to dream bigger. We champion equitable access to the arts, partnering with organizations like Step Afrika! to ensure everyone can experience the vibrant local arts and culture that Washington, D.C. has to offer.



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SAFEWAY 



Washington Gas wishes
Step Afrika! a very Happy
30th Anniversary!



"Congratulations on celebrating 30 years of harnessing the tradition of step as a tool for cultural awareness, youth engagement, and audience-centric entertainment. It's been an honor to serve as the 30th Anniversary gala chair."

Brandon Todd, Sr. Director, Corporate Public Policy, Washington Gas

www.washingtongas.com



**John Hill and Family congratulate
C. Brian Williams and Step Afrika!
on 30 Years of Excellence.**



CONGRATULATIONS STEP AFRIKA!

—Ann Belkov and Jerry Lewis

This is the story of an exodus of African-Americans who left their homes and farms in the South around the time of World War I and traveled to northern industrial cities in search of better lives. It was a momentous journey. Their movement resulted in one of the biggest population shifts in the history of the United States, and the migration is still going on for many people today...

“
To me,
migration
means
movement.”

” — Jacob Lawrence

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Lapine Group is proud to support Step Afrika!'s commitment to artistic excellence over the past 30 years. Here's to celebrating the transformative power of the arts and paving the way for future generations.

Lapine Group



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30th Anniversary Gala.**

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Congratulations to Brian, the administration and artistic staff along with
legions of dancers on **30 years of inspiring and connecting with audiences
across the globe.** We are proud to be a small part of the journey...

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**Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.
is a proud sponsor of Step Afrika!'s
30th Anniversary Gala.**



Congratulations to Step Afrika! for
30 years of artistic & cultural excellence.

- Connie & Patricia Williams



The Menkiti Group & Keller Williams Capital Properties is a proud sponsor of Step Afrika!'s 30th Anniversary Gala.



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STEP AFRIKA!

THROUGH THE YEARS

Step through 30 years of Step Afrika!'s history

VIEW ALL

ARTS EDUCATION

PERFORMANCES

MILESTONES

1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013



PERFORMANCES

DECEMBER 4, 1994

Step Afrika! begins as a Festival in Johannesburg, South Africa

EXPLORE STEP AFRIKA!'S TIMELINE

<https://timeline.stepafrika.org>

30TH ANNIVERSARY GALA TEAM

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Kushner Entertainment

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Executive Producer*

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Step Afrika!
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