

*The world's leading authority  
on the art form of stepping*

LEH  
MAN  
CENTER

APRIL 26 2026 AT 4PM

# STEP AFRİKA!



# WELCOME TO THE EVOLUTION TOUR

**Step Afrika! celebrates more than 30 years of critically acclaimed percussive performance with this groundbreaking program. As the world's leading authority on the art form of stepping, Step Afrika! is committed to pushing the boundaries of the tradition, exploring its nearly limitless artistic possibilities. This evening's production features exciting new dance works alongside a performance shaped and refined through the Company's long-standing collaboration with South Africa**

## ADMINISTRATIVE/CREATIVE TEAM

**C. Brian Williams, Founder & Executive Producer**

**Lamar Lovelace, Executive Director**

**Mfoniso Akpan, Artistic Director**

**Conrad R. Kelly II, Assistant Artistic Director**

**Pascha Barnwell, Company Manager**

**Margo Cunningham, Senior Marketing Manager**

**Chrystal 'Chrys' Vaughan, Manager, Events and Special Projects**

**Milen Matthews, Manager, Arts Education and Community Programs**

**\*Marianne Meadows, Production Manager/Lighting Supervisor**

**Paris Francesca, Costume Designer**

**\*Zavier A.L. Taylor, Projections Designer**

**\*Member of United Scenic Artists local 829**

# ABOUT STEP AFRIKA

Founded in 1994 by C. Brian Williams, Step Afrika! is the world's leading authority on the art form 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 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 and is the GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS™ title holder for the "largest STEPPING dance".

[Learn more about Step Afrika! at stepafrika.org.](http://stepafrika.org)

# PROGRAM

## YEBO

CHOREOGRAPHED BY PELHAM WARNER JR.

Yebo (pronounced “yeah-boh”) is an is a Zulu word meaning “yes” or “I agree.” This work combines the energy of Amapiano and Afro-Beat music with the latest dance movements and styles pouring out of the African continent.

CHOREOGRAPHED BY CHRISTOPHER BRIENT WITH  
CONTRIBUTIONS FROM VARIOUS ARTISTS

## PASSING 30

This dynamic “step” work honors three decades of Step Afrika!’s creativity. Passing 30 features intricate choreography by some of the company’s most influential artists who have merged stepping with contemporary body percussion, spoken word, drumlines, and so much more. It’s a tribute to Step Afrika!’s ever-evolving commitment to present the art form of stepping like no one else in the world.

## ZULU

ORIGINALLY CHOREOGRAPHED BY JACKIE SEMELA

Since 1994, Step Afrika! has studied Zulu traditional dance through its partnership with the legendary Soweto Dance Theatre in the Republic of South Africa. In August 2024, Step Afrika! returned to Johannesburg for a month of exchange, rehearsal, remembrance, and celebration. This performance of Zulu features new solos and choreography developed during that residency—an explosion of rhythm and movement.

Traditionally, stepping is performed by groups, big and small. In this Solo, Step Afrika! investigates the form at its most intimate level.

## SOLO

## STRIKE

CHOREOGRAPHED BY CONRAD R. KELLY II

The word percussion stems from the Latin percussio, meaning “to beat” or “to strike.” In this work, the artists of Step Afrika! strike their bodies and transform the stage into a percussive platform—while also playing one of the world’s oldest instruments. STRIKE is an exploration of rhythm, sound, and power, and it reminds us of the body’s outstanding capacity to speak, to command, and to resonate—without a single word.

STRIKE is commissioned in part by Strathmore and the DC Commission on Arts

# COMPANY

**Conrad R. Kelly II, Assistant Artistic Director**

**Nya Christian**

**Ariel Dykes**

**Keomi Givens Jr**

**Jemeema Montrose**

**Isaiah O'Connor**

**Keanu Powell**

**Ericka Still**

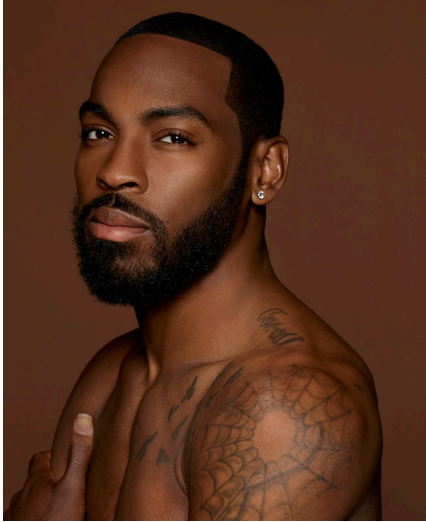
**Joseph Vasquez**

**Pelham Warner Jr**

**Robert Warnsley**

**TreShawn Williams**

**...Special Guest, Jesse Sparks III**



**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 ninth 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 fourth 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 seventh year with the Company.





**ERICKA STILL** is a native of St. Petersburg, FL, and holds a BS in Health Science, Pre-Occupational Therapy, with a minor in Rehabilitation Management from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University. She previously stepped with AKAdemy Exquisite Gems and trained under Paulette W. Johnson at SADA and Shepiro Hardemon as a member and Co-Assistant Artistic Director of Mahogany Dance Theatre. This is Ericka's fourth season with the Company.

**NYA CHRISTIAN** is a native of Cleveland, OH, and holds a BA in Political Science with minors in Sociology and Dance Arts from Howard University. A proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, she has served as Parliamentarian, Step Mistress, and Stroll Captain of the Alpha Chapter. Nya has choreographed for the White House Initiative on HBCUs and Howard University's 2022 Homecoming Step Show. She is formally trained in ballet, tap, jazz, hip hop, modern, and West African. Nya was a member of ELEVATED Dance Crew's award-winning National 1st Place Championship team at the World of Dance competition, and she has 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 third 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 fourth season with the Company.



**KEOMI GIVENS JR.** is a native of Miami, FL, where he trained with Ricardo Dume, Tyrell Rolle, Conrad R. Kelly II, Tanisha Cidel, Maribel Trujillo, and Robert Battle. He studied in the PAVAC Magnet program at Miami Northwestern Senior High School, as well as at New World School of the Arts and Mahogany Dance Theatre, where he served as Rehearsal Director and choreographer. Keomi has performed with Gravity Dance Troupe and Ricky Danco, and has choreographed for the Marching “100” of Florida A&M University, Ricky Danco, and the Booker T. Washington Lady Twisters. This is Keomi’s third 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 second 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 fourth season with the Company.

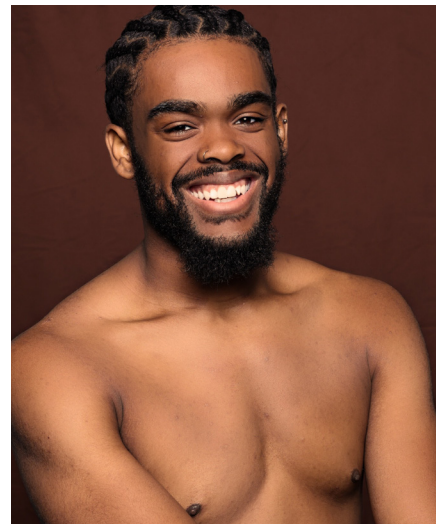
**KEANU POWELL** is a native of Decatur, GA, with a BBA in Management from Howard University. While at Howard, Keanu became an active member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., serving as 2nd Vice President and Step Master. He is also a member of Kappa Kappa Psi National Honorary Band Fraternity, Inc., 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 second season 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 seventh 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 second season with the Company.



**JESSE SPARKS III**, known professionally as DJ JSparkz, is a dynamic host, DJ, and stepper from Seat Pleasant, MD. A graduate of Bowie State University with a degree in Radio and Television Broadcasting, he is a proud member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. (Delta Mu Chapter, initiated 2022), where he served as Stroll Master, choreographing and leading performances that celebrated the fraternity's tradition and spirit. Jesse's artistry is rooted in dance, with training under Queen P the Brand and performances with the renowned Beat Ya Feet Kings. He has brought his talent and energy to major stages with the Washington Wizards, Mystics, Commanders, and D.C. United.