

STEP AFRiKA!

CREATIVE TEAM



C. BRIAN WILLIAMS



MFONISO AKPAN



LAMAR LOVELACE

PERFORMERS



TERRENCE JOHNSON



ROBERT WARNSLEY



CONRAD R. KELLY II



PELHAM WARNER JR.



NYA CHRISTIAN



NEPRI JAMES



BRIE TURNER



NA'IMAH RAY



ARIEL DYKES



ERICKA STILL



ISAIAH O'CONNOR



KEOMI GIVENS JR.



KENNETH L. ALEXANDER



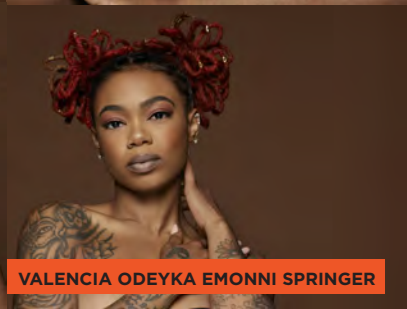
KAMALA HARGROVE



JEROD COLEMAN



JOSEPH VASQUEZ



VALENCIA ODEYKA EMONNI SPRINGER



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 StepAfrika!’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 Masters 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 Hoopin' 2 Hittin, where she was a featured stepper and dancer.

MARIANNE MEADOWS(Lighting Designer/Production Manager)

Marianne Meadows is a member of United Scenic Artists local 829 with a BA from Sarah Lawrence College, MFA from the University of Washington with additional training at Lester Polakovs' Studio and Forum of Stage Design, NYC.

COMPANY BIOS

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 presented 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 YourStyle, 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, Ricky Danco, 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 is 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 VonHoward, 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 PhiBeta 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/ Virginiama jorette teams, and as a model for New York and Richmond, Virginia, fashionweeks. 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 ShepiroHardemon 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. Magna cum laude graduate, Brie was a member of Zeta PhiBeta Sorority Incorporated’s Quintessential Alpha chapter where she served as the Chapter President and stroll mistress, in addition to serving as the co-captain and captain of the Howard University Bisonettes Dance Ensemble. This is Brie’s second season with the Company.

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 StepMaster 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 acapella 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.