

Dance Theatre of Harlem comes to Annenberg

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The renowned Dance Theatre of Harlem (DTH) comes to Annenberg Center Live for performances Friday and Saturday. Their performance is part of Annenberg's "African Roots, American Voices" series, a multiyear journey that celebrates the African Diaspora's unique contributions to African culture. Each year focuses on a different musical genre. The 2015-16 season focuses on jazz, a wholly American art form.

DTH highlights several new works as well as 1999's "Return," written to celebrate the company's 30th anniversary, and choreographed by Philadelphia native Robert Garland. It features the music of James Brown and Aretha Franklin.

"In doing this piece I wanted to connect with my

classical ballet side and my African-American cultural heritage side," Garland explains.

Garland, who grew up in what he calls the "racially diverse Mt. Airy section of the city," says he always wanted to be a dancer. "I grew up at a time of the Jackson 5, the Temptations, the Four Tops and others. They always had routines and I would imitate their dances. I remember begging my mother for dance classes and she finally agreed. And I danced all through high school until I finally went off to New York City and the Juilliard School, where I graduated with a bachelor of fine arts degree."

Upon graduation, Garland said he immediately joined DTH as an apprentice and worked his way up the ranks, eventually to prin-

cipal dancer. He is also the company's webmaster.

In addition to creating several ballets for DTH, Garland has also created works for New York City Ballet, Britain's Royal Ballet, Oakland Ballet and many others. Most recently he created a work honoring jazz legend Wynton Marsalis, featuring American Ballet Theater ballerina Misty Copeland dancing to his music.

With a shortage of African-American dancers in the field, Garland said the best way to attract more is to "encourage them. The arts can be very myopic in seeing what the future holds. So we need to get them into schools — even starting schools on our own — to help our children of color focus on the future."

For more information, call (215) 898-3900.





The Harlem Dance Theatre's 30th anniversary performance is choreographed by Philadelphia native Robert Garland and features the music of James Brown and Aretha Franklin. — PHOTO/DANCE THEATRE OF HARLEM