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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 10, 2017

Celebrating Hip-Hop and its Heritage

FirstWorks Artistic Icons Series Presents Rennie Harris Puremovement

Award-winning choreographer Rennie Harris protects the legacy of hip-hop with a dazzling 25th Anniversary Tour – and teaches a few steps to students along the way

PROVIDENCE, RI – **FirstWorks**, a Rhode Island non-profit dedicated to connecting art with audiences, continues its 2016/2017 **Artistic Icons Series** with celebrated street dance company **Rennie Harris Puremovement** on **Friday, February 24, 2017 at 8:00 p.m.** at **The VETS** (1 Avenue of the Arts, Providence). Tickets for the performance, presented by **FirstWorks**, range from **\$18-\$58** and are available at first-works.org and 401-421-ARTS (2787).

Dr. Lorenzo “**Rennie**” **Harris**, hailed as “the most respected—and the most brilliant—hip-hop choreographer in America,” is credited with taking the urban stylings of hip-hop dance from the streets onto the concert stage, forever breaking down barriers between the two. The dancers of **Rennie Harris Puremovement** will thrill audiences with the vernacular of hip-hop—including popping, locking, voguing, B-boying, and dueling—

translated into explosive dance theater. The result is a flashy, jaw-dropping spectacle so innovative and exciting that crowds are known to “roar like thunder.”

Harris, a native of North Philadelphia, founded America’s first and longest running touring hip-hop dance company **Rennie Harris Puremovement** in 1992 based on his belief that “hip-hop is the most important original expression of a new generation.”

To this day, Harris continues to extol the “deep humanity and vision” inherent in hip-hop that the uninitiated may brush off as simply another pop culture fad. He is a fierce guardian of a tradition that predates the very existence of pop culture—the rhythms and movements that followed the people and paths of the African diaspora. During this last weekend of Black History Month, FirstWorks shines the spotlight on an art form at whose roots Harris says rest “the beginning of black contemporary culture.”

“From an art of the streets, hip-hop has grown into an essential tool for social transformation and, over 25 years, **Rennie Harris Puremovement** turned a new form of dance performance into a cultural phenomenon,” said **FirstWorks** Founder and Executive Artistic Director Kathleen Pletcher. “During a time of such profound change in America, it’s a honor to connect Rennie Harris with our FirstWorks audiences and at the **Rhythm of Change Festival’s HipHop Summit** the morning after the performance.”

For the company's first Providence appearance in over 10 years taking place at The VETS on Friday, February 24, FirstWorks presents **Rennie Harris Puremovement** in "Nuttin' But A Word," a vibrant suite of urban street dance set to dance tracks from Mandrill, DJ Lee, Goodmen, Cinematic Orchestra, the Yoruba priest/music producer Osunlade, and unattributed underground cuts.

A **FirstWorks pre-show JumpStart**, presented in partnership with Brown University's Rhythm of Change Festival, celebrates music and movement from across the African diaspora. Local hip-hop dance troupe RawKin' RhythMix, Troupe Yeredon from Mali, TRYBE dance company, and West African dance and drumming performances by students from TAPA (Trinity Academy of Performing Arts) are the featured performers for FirstWorks' signature pre-show series that highlights local artists. The JumpStart performances begin at 7 p.m. in The VETS lobbies.

Noted hip-hop theater director and dance scholar **Dr. Daniel Banks** will moderate an **Artist Up-Close** conversation with **Rennie Harris** in the VETS theater immediately following the evening performance.

As part of **FirstWorks Arts Learning** program, nearly 1,000 K-12 students from across Rhode Island will attend a "History of Hip-Hop" matinee with **Rennie Harris Puremovement** at The VETS on Friday, February 24 at 10:00 a.m. Company members will reach into the community with dance workshops taking place at Sanchez High School, TAPA, Classical

High School, Central High School, and New Urban Arts after-school program on Thursday, February 23, and will lead university-level master classes at Brown University, Providence College and Roger Williams University on February 23 and 24.

At the close of this dynamic **FirstWorks** residency, Harris will be honored at a **Hip-Hop Summit** taking place as part of the annual **Rhythm of Change Festival**, hosted by the Department of Theater Arts and Performance Studies at Brown University. The Hip-Hop Summit takes place at Ashamu Dance Studio (83 Waterman Street, Providence) on Saturday, February 25, from 10:00-11:30 a.m. Roundtable panelists include Dr. Lorenzo "Rennie" Harris, Ana "Rokafella" Garcia, Dr. Daniel Banks, Dr. Tricia Rose, Omari Wiles, and Jamal Jackson. The Rhythm of Change Festival takes place February 24-26, with weekend passes and single event tickets available online at <http://www.rhythmofchangefestival.com/tickets> and at the door of Ashamu Dance Studio during festival events.

About Rennie Harris Puremovement

Founded in 1992, Rennie Harris Puremovement's (RHPM) is the first professional hip-hop dance company in the world, and is known specifically for its internationally acclaimed hip-hop dance theater works. Lead by Guggenheim Fellow and award winning hip-hop choreographer Rennie Harris, RHPM challenges the perception of hip-hop and its stereotypes. Named by the U.S. State Department as an international ambassador for urban arts, RHPM performances and programs are based on the belief that hip-hop is the most important original expression of a new generation and can be utilized to meet the needs of our young people and communities today. In a society where hip-hop is often portrayed as a violent, undisciplined counterculture, RHPM deconstructs popular perception of this medium, expanding and challenging the boundaries and definitions of hip-hop in general. Because hip-hop continues to be the chosen medium for youth to express their creativity and ideas, RHPM works to support emerging young artist, honor its history, explore its ideas, and further its contributions to the surrounding community.

About Rhythm of Change Festival

Rhythm of Change is an annual festival at Brown University celebrating African and African diasporic performance. For over twenty-seven years, The Rhythm of Change Festival has been gathering people across divisions of class, nationality, culture and discipline to co-create art for social change.

About FirstWorks

FirstWorks is a non-profit based in Providence, Rhode Island whose purpose is to build the cultural, educational and economic vitality of its community by engaging audiences with world-class performing arts and education programs. Since 2004, **FirstWorks** festivals, performances and programs have attracted more than 366,000 participants. The **FirstWorks Arts Learning Program** reaches over 4,000 students from public and charter schools across Rhode Island with transformative arts-based learning experiences. **FirstWorks** is Founding Creative Partner for PVDfest, partnering with the City of Providence to produce an international arts celebration held each June in downtown Providence. The 2016 PVDfest drew over 75,000 to experience music, art and spectacle. Visit <http://first-works.org> to learn more.

Listings Information:

WHO: **FirstWorks Artistic Icons Series presents Rennie Harris Puremovement**

WHAT: A suite of new and classic hip-hop dance works from the pioneer of American street dance theater

WHEN: **Friday, February 24, 2017 at 8:00 p.m.**

WHERE: **FirstWorks at The Vets** (1 Avenue of the Arts, Providence)

TICKETS: **\$18-\$58** (includes a \$3 restoration fee)

PURCHASE: Tickets are available at <http://first-works.org> and at the Vets Box

Office: **401-421-ARTS (2787)**, 220 Weybosset Street, Providence

SPECIAL OFFERS: 20% off ticket 4-pack with code HIPHOP4

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