



WESTAF

The Association of American Cultures-TAAC
The Western States Arts Federation-WESTAF

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NOT THE SAME OLD SONG AND DANCE! **RENNIE HARRIS RETURNS TO DENVER FOR ONE NIGHT**

Iconic Hip-Hop Pioneer Brings P-funk to the Denver Center for Performing Arts

DENVER, CO – Saturday, July 14, 2007 – For one night only, the Stage Theatre at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts will be transformed into an Asphalt Jungle—when Rennie Harris and his unique brand of hip-hop dance return to Denver for the first time in 10 years. As part of The Association of American Cultures' national multicultural arts conference, *Open Dialogue XI: Global Connections to Cultural Democracy*, Rennie Harris and his company will perform along with acclaimed poet Laura "Piece" Kelley, the Brown Lotus Collective, and the Denver-based Spirituals Project. Tickets to the event, titled *Not the Same Old Song and Dance*, are on sale for \$15 at www.westaf.org, the Denver Center's box office at 14th and Curtis, at www.denvercenter.org, at all King Soopers locations, or by calling the Denver Center at (303) 893-4100. The Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF) and *Westword* are sponsoring the event.

Built around an ensemble of b-boys and hip-hop artists, Rennie Harris and his crew will perform a retrospective of Harris' last fifteen years of dance, featuring their acclaimed repertory of funk, breaking, popping, locking, and stupefying twists and turns that promise to amaze and captivate the audience. Harris founded his company based on the belief that hip-hop is the most important original expression of a new generation. "The fact that someone as big as Rennie Harris is coming to Denver really shows that our hip-hop scene is on the map," said Maisha Fields, a local hip-hop dancer and longtime fan of Rennie Harris. With its roots in the inner-city African-American and Latino communities, hip-hop is a contemporary indigenous art form that transcends racial, religious, and economic boundaries, and one that—because of its pan-racial and global popularity—can help bridge these divisions.

Laura "Piece" Kelley is a nationally recognized spoken word poet, hip-hop artist, and arts educator. Piece holds several national poetry slam titles, has been a featured poet on HBO's Def Poetry Jam, and was cast in *Underground Poets Railroad*, a national tour and documentary. The Spirituals Project, based at the University of Denver, will present Sankofa, a group of singers that will perform several religious folk songs created and first sung by African Americans in slavery in the United States. The Brown Lotus Collective, a Latin jazz ensemble comprised of members from the Californian Latin groove band, Mezcal, combines jazz and spoken word with Latin flavor for special blend of music and storytelling.

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"The eclectic lineup of performers is quite notable for its amazing diversity. The world is coming to Denver on July 14, it will be an evening you will never forget." said José Mercado, Executive Director of Labyrinth Arts Academy, a local performing arts organization for underserved youth that incorporates performance of new work, who is also producing the event.

The Association of American Cultures' (TAAC) 11th biennial conference on art, culture, and diversity, *Open Dialogue XI: Global Connections to Cultural Democracy*, sponsored by the Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF), will take place at the Magnolia Hotel in downtown Denver from Thursday, July 12, through Sunday, July 15, 2007.

Please visit www.westaf.org/taac2007 for more information, to register for *Open Dialogue XI*, and to purchase tickets to *Not the Same Old Song and Dance*. To request more information about the conference or to inquire about the performance showcase, please contact Erin Bassity at erin.bassity@westaf.org or at (303) 629-1166.

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About TAAC

Founded in 1985, The Association of American Cultures (TAAC) is a nonprofit organization that seeks to advocate for artists and arts organization, to represent the distinct and collective concerns of diverse populations in the United States, and to preserve the creative vitality of cultural identities through the arts. TAAC is committed to the concept of cultural diversity in U.S. public arts policy and recognizes the importance of including representatives from all cultures and backgrounds in the *Open Dialogues*. For more information, or to join TAAC, please visit www.taac.com.

About WESTAF

The Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF) is a nonprofit arts service organization dedicated to the creative advancement and preservation of the arts. Founded in 1974, the organization fulfills its mission to strengthen the financial, organizational, and policy infrastructure of the arts in the West by providing innovative programs and services. WESTAF's constituents include the state arts agencies of the West, as well as artists and arts organizations located in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. WESTAF is funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. For more information, please visit www.westaf.org.