The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
Presents

LOTUS: Tap Stars Reunite
to Celebrate the Art Form

featuring

Omar Edwards
Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards
Derick K. Grant
Jason Samuels Smith
Joseph Webb
Baakari Wilder

And Live Jazz Music by the
Lafayette Harris Jr. Quintet

Six award-winning tap dance artists reunite for one night only October 7, 2017 in the newly renovated Terrace Theater

(WASHINGTON)—For one night only, October 7, 2017, six award-winning tap artists, connected through their Broadway background in Bring in ‘da Noise, Bring in ‘da Funk, reunite to celebrate their art form in the newly renovated Kennedy Center Terrace Theater. Featuring D.C. natives Joseph Webb and Baakari Wilder along with Omar Edwards, Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards, Derick K. Grant, and Jason Samuels Smith, this unique performance is choreographed to honor the roots of tap dance, their predecessors, and each other, all to live jazz music by the Lafayette Harris Jr. Quintet.
“Performing together again for the first time in 21 years is thrilling,” said director Joseph Webb. “It is an opportunity for us to revisit and honor our legacy. Tap dance has deep roots and tradition in African dance and in America’s history, similar to the process the Lotus flower (for which the show is named) has to go through in order to bloom. This performance is a way to acknowledge and show gratitude to the art and to those who have come before us and helped us get where we are today.”

This sense of gratitude is what positions the performance within JFKC: A Centennial Celebration of John F. Kennedy, the Kennedy Center’s continuing programming initiative marking the 100th anniversary of John F. Kennedy’s birth and legacy, inspired by five ideals frequently attributed to America’s 35th President: Courage, Freedom, Justice, Service, and Gratitude.

The program is part of a month-long suite of performances celebrating the re-opening of the Terrace Theater, the Center’s most versatile and intimate performance spaces. With its percussive rhythms, the tap programming will spotlight the theater’s lauded acoustical features, which were enhanced during renovations.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

A gifted dancer, entertainer, and musician who has been in love with tap since he was 12 years old, Omar Edwards draws from his 23 years of experience and formal training including with masters such as Henry Letang, Jimmy Slyde, and Marie Brooks. For the last seven years, Edwards has trained under the tutelage of the great musician/songwriter Olu Dara. In 1994, he earned national acclaim when he and then tap partner Daniel B. Wooten Jr. won 13 times including the grand prize on the famed TV show Star Search. From then on, he has embarked on a tap dance career that spans the world of music, dance, television, theater, and film. He was the first of his generation to release an album where the tap dancer is the leader of the band as well as the lead instrument with his album Tap Dancin is Music (1998). His foot music, which he now calls Afro Feet: Music and Beyond, has been performed in over 20 countries, such as Australia, Japan, Germany, and Portugal. Other accomplishments include an international tour of the hit show Black and Blue and a featured dancer in the Broadway show Bring in ‘da Noize, Bring in ‘da Funk. He also starred as the "Sandman" on the legendary television show Showtime at the Apollo for seven years and was featured in the musical movie Camp. Concert credits include performing with Alicia Keys live at the Hollywood Bowl and dancing on record with rappers Common and Mos Def on the song “The Questions.” He has performed with Savion Glover live at the White House and was also a highlighted guest on The Ellen DeGeneres Show.
Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards is a two-time Bessie Award winner (as performer and choreographer), Princess Grace Award, and Astaire Award for Best Female Performer in Broadway’s After Midnight. Additional Broadway credits include Black and Blue and Bring in ‘da Noise, Bring in ‘da Funk. Sumbry-Edwards was integral to Noise/Funk’s international tour (dance captain/principal) and has performed as a special guest for Grammy® artist Fantasia and International Jazz Day featuring the legendary Al Jarreau and Dee Dee Bridgewater. Film credits include TAP with Gregory Hines, Spike Lee’s Bamboozled (Assistant Choreographer/actor), and The Rise and Fall of Miss Thang (Best Lead Actress nomination). Choreography credits include Michael Jackson’s “Rock My World”, The Cotton Club’s “Sophisticated Ladies”, The Blues Project (co-choreographer/creator), and Jacob’s Pillow debut of And Still You Must Swing (New York Times’ The Best of Dance for 2016). With over 30 years touring the world, she also spent 11 years as Michael Jackson’s tap instructor.

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Derick K. Grant (performer, choreographer, director) has an established career that spans over three decades. Under the direction of two-time Tony Award®-winning director George C. Wolfe, he was an original company member and dance captain for Bring in ‘da Noise, Bring in ‘da Funk at both The Public Theater and on Broadway as well as starred in the role of ‘da beat for the first National Tour of the show. He created the critically acclaimed show Imagine Tap! and was appointed as the Co-Artistic Director of Chicago Human Rhythm Project’s Rhythm World Summer Festival. He has been the recipient of the Princess Grace Award for Upcoming Young Artists; The Helen Hayes Award (Washington, D.C.) for Outstanding Featured Actor as well as two additional awards for his role in Noise/Funk; two Los Angeles Ovation Awards for choreography and for best Ensemble performance in Noise/Funk, a nomination for the Lester Horton Dance Award for Best Male Performance from the Dance Resource Center of Los Angeles, and was most recently recognized for Best Choreography for Imagine Tap! His numerous choreography and performance credits include: The Apollo Theatre’s Get On The Good Foot (James Brown Tribute) local and national tour; Kennedy Center’s African Odyssey program (Expresiones Latinas Festival); opening number for Daniela Mercury with Brazilian artist Nego Gato: The Aaron Davis Hall Black History Month Celebration; Ann Arbor’s Arts Festival; and The Embassy in Portugal, among others. Grant’s own production of the history of tap, A NIGHT OUT: TAP! toured the country successfully for three months. Grant continues to teach in NYC as a faculty member at Steps On Broadway and at venues worldwide, offering group and private instruction as well as lecture demonstrations. He is currently the national tap spokesperson for So Danca.

Jason Samuels Smith (performer, choreographer, instructor, speaker, actor) is a multitalented leader and advocate for the art form of tap. Over the course of his extensive travels, he has influenced, and at times, introduced the culture of tap dance to audiences of all ages and social economic backgrounds. Accolades include a Dance Magazine Award, an Emmy® and an American Choreography Award for “Outstanding Choreography”; Bessie recognition (NY Dance and Performance Awards); the Gregory Hines Humanitarian Award; Certificate of Appreciation by the City of Los Angeles for creating the First Annual Los Angeles Tap Festival (2003); and an Andrew Mellon Grant/Joyce Foundation Residency, among others. Choreography and special guest performances include feature films Idlewild with Outkast; Black Nativity; Psych with Dulé Hill as well as a live performance for Comic Con; MYA on CBS’s Secret Talents of the Stars; and Fox’s hit series So You Think You Can Dance (solo and company special guest performances), and among others. Other television and film credits include the Dean Hargrove’s award-winning short film Tap Heat (co-star) and full-length documentary Tap World (Executive Consultant); co-star of dance documentary UPN/AJ which
aired on PBS (2014), to name a few. Performances include Sammy (tribute to Sammy Davis Jr.); Soul Possessed (leading role); Tony Award®-winning Broadway show Bring in ‘da Noise, Bring in ‘da Funk (principal and lead roles); and Imagine Tap! (leading role). Samuels Smith continues to tour the world with his own tap company formerly known as A.C.G.I. (Anybody Can Get It). He is on faculty at Broadway Dance Center (NYC) and founded the tap program for Debbie Allen Dance Academy (LA). He also consulted on several new festivals, projects, and events in order to help garner success in supporting venues that highlight rhythmic arts.

Joseph Webb is an international award-winning dancer, choreographer, actor, educator, and poet who has showcased his talents in a number of performances throughout the years, including the Tony Award®-winning Broadway production, Bring in ‘da Noise, Bring in ‘da Funk. Following his Broadway success, Webb ventured into acting with an appearance in the Martin Scorsese film Bringing Out The Dead, and appeared in numerous print and television ads. He has also performed on talk shows including The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, The Oprah Winfrey Show, and Live with Regis and Kathy Lee. In early 2017, Webb was nominated for Helen Hayes Best Supporting Actor and Best Ensemble for his performance in Tony Award®-winning Broadway musical Jelly’s Last Jam at the Signature Theater. He is a Presidential Scholar and graduated from Marymount Manhattan College with a bachelor of fine arts degree in theater arts. Webb was a Full Time Lecturer at Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn and while there, he enrolled in the M.A. in Applied Theater program at City University of New York/School of Professional Studies. He has been a guest teacher and performer at the D.C. and L.A. Tap Festivals, and a special guest artist at Clifford Brown Jazz Festival in Wilmington, Delaware, and executed a stellar performance at the Tap City Concert in NYC which was reviewed by the New York Times. He was a featured dancer in the cast of Thank You Gregory, which toured the United States. Other appearances include Tap Stars (Hamburg, Germany), Cotton Club Parade with Wynton Marsalis, and Black Nativity (2013), which starred Angela Basset and Forest Whitaker, among others. Recent performances include renowned Carnegie Hall in NYC; the Kennedy Center as a featured guest of the DC Jazz Festival; headliner at the H Street Festival, and more. He is the founder and director of American Embassy of Dance, a dance school specializing in percussive dance in Washington, D.C.

Baakari Wilder is internationally known for starring in the Broadway musical Bring in ‘da Noise, Bring in ‘da Funk. He received a Bessie Award for his performance and later assumed the lead role for a year. He has also received the Pola Nirenska Award for achievement in dance. Wilder’s dancing has delighted audiences around the world in places such as the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, France, Africa, Brazil, Germany, Japan, and Russia. He has a bachelor of arts degree in theater from the University of Maryland at College Park. He appeared as an ensemble tap dancer in Spike Lee’s Bamboozled, the Discovery Channel’s Time Warp, and as a speech writer in House of Cards. He shares his knowledge of tap dancing through his role as assistant artistic director of the Washington, D.C.-based company Capitol Tap. He is the co-founder of Metro Tap Roots, which is currently in its third season of producing new works at Dance Place in Washington, D.C.

Known as the “go to” pianist by many other musicians and band leaders, Lafayette Harris Jr. has performed with the Duke Ellington Legacy Orchestra, toured for seven years with Max Roach, and has toured Europe and the U.S. with four-time Grammy® nominee Ernestine Anderson. He has worked with Al Grey, John Gordon, Slide Hampton, Curtis Fuller, Roswell Rudd, Chico Freeman and Cindy Blackman, Allan Harris, Carla Cook, René Marie, and among many others. He was the conductor and keyboardist for the Broadway smash hit Bring in ‘da
Noise, Bring in ‘da Funk. Harris has since been involved with more Broadway shows including The Full Monty and The Color Purple.

**FUNDING CREDITS**

Support for Jazz at the Kennedy Center is generously provided by C. Michael Kojaian.

Support for JFKC: A Centennial Celebration of John F. Kennedy is provided by Ambassador Elizabeth Frawley Bagley, Chevron, the Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation, Northern Trust, and Target.

**TICKET INFORMATION**

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