



**Contemporary Dance**

**Artist: Rainbow Dance Theatre**



**Rainbow Dance Theatre**

**About the Artist:**

Darryl Thomas and Valerie Bergman are the founders and co-artistic directors of *Rainbow Dance Theatre*. Darryl is Professor of Dance at *Western Oregon University* in Monmouth, Oregon. He has trained professionally in: improvisation, jazz, African, butoh, tai chi, hula and modern dance. He is a choreographer and also a former member of *Pilobolus Dance Theatre*. Valerie is guest artist-in-Dance at *Western Oregon University*. She has performed, choreographed and taught ballet as well as: modern, haitian, hula, hip hop and West African dance throughout the world. *Rainbow Dance Theatre* has toured its multi-cultural dance performances throughout the mainland United States, Mexico, Europe and Asia to both critical and popular acclaim.

**About the art form:**

“To comprehend a dance we must open ourselves to the culture from which it springs; conversely, as we begin to gain insight into a dance we are on the path to understanding the culture that produced it.”

Rhonda Grauer

Dance is a symbol of cultural identity. Hip hop connotes both a culture and a dance style. The culture is that of urban African Americans and includes unique: clothing (baggy pants, sweatshirts, heavy gold chains, hats, heavy sneakers); music (Rap), visual art (graffiti art spray painted on walls and trains); language and dance (hip hop) styles. The dance style hip hop gets its two-part name from its combination of being new or “fresh” (hip) steps done with a bounce in the body or legs (hop). Many of the current hip hop steps can be directly traced to their roots in West African Dance, a dance style known for its large free movement of the body and its jumping and bouncing connection to the rhythm of the drums.

West African Dance is an explosive, athletic style of dance that incorporates: rhythmic connection to the drums, polyrhythmic body coordination (various body parts moving simultaneously to different rhythms) and gymnastic-style stunts into a celebration of the events important to village life. The harvest, the rains, the seasons, marriage, birth, coming of age, birds and other animals are all honored and imitated in the songs and dances of the community. The drum and the dance become inseparable as these stories are told through a dialogue between sound and movement. Enhanced by brightly colored and ornately decorated costumes, the dancers and drummers embody the spirit of the natural world that surrounds them and gives them life.

Dance is a medium of cultural fusion. When the African people were brought to the United States as slaves they brought with them their dance and their drumming. Although forbidden to openly dance their traditional dances or play their drums for many years, these people passed down to their children and grandchildren a form of their indigenous dance and music through body percussion, tap dancing and popular dance forms. This style was influenced as well by their assimilation of the European-based culture of the United States. In spite of being oppressed individuals, the African American population has been the source of the majority of our country’s popular dance and music styles.

**Performance Detail:**

This high-energy program traces the music and dance of contemporary African-Americans back to its roots in African culture; illustrating the commonalities as well as differences that have evolved over time and distance. Using authentic African instruments, costumes and vignettes featuring “hamboning” and “voguing,” the performers creatively engage their audience in the process of exploring cultural history. Students will participate in learning dances, songs, body percussion and drumming to experience first-hand the artistic wealth of the African and African American cultures.

**Performance Fee:**

Price	Performance
\$900	For one performace
\$1440	Day with Rainbow Dance
\$1260	For two shows at the same school
\$360	For additional 3 <sup>rd</sup> show