



**WASHINGTON
PERFORMING ARTS**
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**WASHINGTON PERFORMING ARTS ANNOUNCES FALL 2020
MARS ARTS DC: VIRTUAL ONLINE PROGRAMMING
FOCUSING ON BREADTH OF DC ARTS SCENE**

Two separate series of free *Mars Arts DC: Virtual* events showcase dance and music across multiple genres, including hip-hop, Afrobeats, Latinx and South Asian styles, and more—all in high-quality digital productions

Beginning October 19, the *Rhythm & Motion* series features master artists with local roots: singer/songwriter Jonathan Acosta, dancer/choreographer Kara Jenelle, hip-hop and spoken word artist Yusha Assad, and dancer/choreographer Ronald Ríos

Premiering on November 30, the *Dance in DC* series presents DMV dancers in site-specific works recorded at and in partnership with DC businesses anchored in the community

Fall 2020 programs lead up to the *Home Delivery Plus* subscription series set to launch in 2021, featuring international artists and world-class performances in a paid-admission format

(Washington, DC)—**Washington Performing Arts (WPA)** today announced *Mars Arts DC: Virtual*, an ongoing program of free online presentations highlighting the astounding breadth and exceptional artistry of the DC arts scene. Showcasing both music and dance across numerous genres, the initial fall 2020 offering of *Mars Arts DC: Virtual* will be two related yet distinct series of programming. Launching Monday, October 19, ***Rhythm & Motion*** comprises four original films, each spotlighting a particular DC-based or -raised artist (two musicians and two dancer/choreographers) in a combination documentary and performance/masterclass format. In a second series of *Mars Arts DC: Virtual* programming beginning November 30, ***Dance in DC*** celebrates the innovation and dynamism of the local dance and business scenes, with each program pairing a dancer or ensemble with a signature DC business in a site-specific work produced just for WPA, along with conversations

between dancers and business owners about their mutual connections. All programs in the series will stream from WPA's [Home Delivery](#) hub of free online programming and on [Facebook](#).

Both series of *Mars Arts DC: Virtual* programs are curated by C. Lorenzo Evans III, a longtime dancer/choreographer based in the DC area and Washington Performing Arts's Chief Operating Officer and Director of Finance. Mr. Evans's past artistic collaborators include Fantasia, Jessica Simpson, the DC Lottery, and DC's own "Godfather of Go-Go," the late, great Chuck Brown.

"As the Chief Operating Officer of Washington Performing Arts, it was an honor to activate my artistic and curatorial background with the Wells Fargo Cultural Excellence grant and to bring these *Mars Arts DC: Virtual* presentations to life amid the COVID-19 pandemic," Evans said. "In these series, we have met and worked with incredible DC-based artists and business owners, and I am hopeful that *Mars Arts DC: Virtual* will bring audiences the same joy and inspiration that it has brought the WPA team in planning and presenting it."

RHYTHM & MOTION

The first series of *Mars Arts DC: Virtual* programs, entitled *Rhythm & Motion*, underscores the talent of four energetic and thriving artists with roots in the Washington, DC area. The virtual programs include two dance masterclasses led by international choreographers Kara Jenelle and Ronald Ríos. Jenelle (a DC-born artist who is now based in Los Angeles) shares her virtuosity in Afrobeats dance, while Ríos showcases Latinx styles such as salsa, bachata, and merengue. The series also features musical performances by Latin Grammy® Award–nominated artist Jonathan Acosta and renowned hip-hop and spoken word artist Yusha Assad. Each program intersperses performance or instruction with incisive commentary and personal reflections from the featured artists.

THE ARTISTS & PROGRAMS:

Kara Jenelle, Afrobeats Dance

Premieres Monday, October 19, 7PM

Recorded in Los Angeles

Kara Jenelle is a dance performer, choreographer, and teaching artist based in Los Angeles, CA. Since relocating from Washington, DC, she has worked with artists such as Janet Jackson, Lauryn Hill, Black Eyed Peas, Beyoncé, Jidenna, Khalid, Will Smith, Fantasia, Step Afrika! and appeared on *The Voice*, Off-Broadway, BET, Black Girls Rock, Lifetime, and more. Jenelle has also been featured in *Dance Magazine*, *Voyage LA*, and *Essence* for monumental achievements throughout her career. As an international educator, she has taught in over 10 countries and she works diligently to represent the African diaspora in the commercial dance industry. Jenelle is currently pursuing her MFA at UCLA as a Graduate Fellow while always advocating for the culture and encouraging positive representation of Black women through her movement. She is currently a faculty member at Movement Lifestyle (LA) and for the annual Ladies of Hip-Hop Festival. She is also the Founder of Delta Chi Xi Honorary Dance Fraternity, Inc.

Jonathan Acosta, Latin Music

Premieres Monday, October 26, 7PM

Recorded at GALA Hispanic Theatre

Jonathan Acosta is a Venezuelan singer and songwriter, who also plays the Venezuelan cuatro and the violin. From 1989-2001, he received musical training at the Conservatory of Music Vicente Emilio Sojo and participated for 12 years in the National System of Symphonic Orchestras of Venezuela as a violinist. In September of 2018, Acosta launched his new musical tour “¡Vamos Paisano!” in the United States, after the resounding success of his motivational project “#ANIMOVENEZUELA” with which he performed nationally and internationally. His music is genuine, versatile, and rich in rhythms and melody. His compositions have high motivational content, which has made him worthy of recognition and international awards. Acosta has recorded two albums—one with the Bahareque group (“Si así llueve, que no escampe”) and another that was nominated for a Latin Grammy Award in 2017 (“Pido Permiso”). He recently became the first singer-songwriter to perform in a symphonic concert honoring the Venezuelan musician Simón Díaz. Throughout his career, he has performed in numerous symphonic and popular concerts and has been invited to participate in musical events internationally to Italy, Spain, Colombia, and Panama.

Ronald Ríos, Latin Dance

Premieres Monday, November 9, 7PM

Recorded at Dance Exchange

Ronald Ríos is a multifaceted dancer, performer, choreographer, and instructor of salsa, bachata, merengue, jazz, hip hop, and modern dance styles. He has been a prominent influence on the global Latin Dance genre, and has lived and performed in Washington, DC, Los Angeles, and New York City, contributing greatly to the dance cultures of each city. As a hip-hop dancer, Ríos has performed with artists including FloRida, Cassidy, and Three-Six Mafia. As a Latin dancer, he has performed on the Latin Grammy Awards and with several Latin artists. As a choreographer, Ríos has choreographed and performed works for the American Dance Theater and the National Basketball Association (NBA). In the Washington, DC region, he has received the Best Artistic Director Award from the Latin Community Awards and has served as a coach and instructor for many of the top Latin dance programs in DC, Maryland, and Virginia.

Yusha Assad, Hip Hop/Neo Soul/Spoken Word

Premieres Monday, November 23, 7PM

Recorded at The LINE Hotel DC

Yusha Assad is a creative, lyrical, and insightful storyteller/vocalist with more than 20 years of experience in writing and recording music. A 2016 *Source Magazine* Unsigned Hype, Assad makes dope music that tells a story and inspires greatness. He believes that his success must be built with the hands and hearts of people, and not off their backs. He uses his music to connect, inspire, and challenge listeners to live life “with great care.” Assad has opened for major artists, such as The Game, K. Michelle, Brandy, Scarface, Ja Rule, and August Alsina, among others. He has performed at

conferences including A3C Festival in Atlanta, SXSW in Austin, and Revival DC in the nation’s capital. His most recent release is the single “Heal Me” featuring Grammy-nominated R&B star Raheem DeV Vaughn, which addresses the topics of mental health and healing. Assad is currently working on growing his music app, and his project *Workin & Winnin* was released in July 2020.

Rhythm & Motion is made possible through the generous support of Wells Fargo. The series is also part of the ongoing Mars Arts DC program highlighting artists from the DC region—a partnership of Mars, Incorporated and Washington Performing Arts, with support from Jacqueline Badger Mars.

DANCE IN DC

Launching on Monday, November 30, the second series of *Mars Arts DC: Virtual* programming, *Dance in DC*, spotlights the similar currents of innovation, risk-taking, and community immersion that inspire both the District’s dance and **independent** business scenes. Over six programs (two short videos per week each Monday and Friday through December 18), the series will cover a wide range of dance styles and cultures and visit iconic indie businesses throughout the District. Individual short programs (up to 10 minutes each) will be recorded at a location that holds personal meaning and appeal for the dancers and will include footage of both the dancer(s) and business owner(s) sharing stories and experiences that connect them. Part of the *Mars Arts DC* initiative, the films will premiere in the [Home Delivery](#) section of WPA’s website and on its social platforms, as well as on the artists’ and businesses’ profiles.

Confirmed business partners for the series include legendary DC restaurant Ben’s Chili Bowl, Mr. Braxton Bar & Kitchen, Chaia Tacos, innovative boutique Nubian Hueman, Republic Restoratives Distillery, and cutting-edge arts and technology space ARTECHOUSE. A complete list of participating dancers, with webcast premiere dates, will be announced in the coming weeks.

Directing all the *Dance in DC* videos (as well as the November 16 Yusha Assad video in the *Rhythm & Motion* series, above) is the Chilean-born, DC-based independent filmmaker and music-video director Francisco Campos-Lopez. Among his many honors, Campos-Lopez has won “Best Thriller” from the New York Film Festival for his short film *Acassis* (2007) and “Best Director” from the Philadelphia Independent Film Awards for his debut feature film, *I Did Her Wrong* (2017), based on Shakespeare’s *King Lear*.

Dance in DC is part of the ongoing Mars Arts DC program highlighting artists from the DC region—a partnership of Mars, Incorporated and Washington Performing Arts, with support from Jacqueline Badger Mars.

COMING IN 2021: HOME DELIVERY PLUS

Beginning in January of 2021, Washington Performing Arts will follow the free fall *Mars Arts DC: Virtual* series with a new paid-admission subscription series, *Home Delivery Plus*, expanding upon its current *Home Delivery* hub of free online artistic and educational programming. With more than a dozen offerings in all, each *Home Delivery Plus* “package” centers around an all-new performance by a “Headline Artist,” recorded in high-quality audio and video just for Washington Performing Arts—with most performances set in signature DC-area venues. (Given current COVID-19 precautions, all performance recordings are planned *without* an in-person ticketed audience.)

Representing a wide range of genres, artists include mezzo-soprano J’Nai Bridges, Ballet Folklórico de México de Amalia Hernández, Indian tabla master Zakir Hussain, jazz singer Veronica Swift, and the classical “super trio” of pianist Evgeny Kissin, violinist Joshua Bell, and cellist Steven Isserlis. The full list of Headline Artists and other initial series details is available on [WPA’s website](#).

More than just an online concert series, *Home Delivery Plus* is custom-made for the internet, with each Headline Artist performance complemented by a selection of additional components such as an “Opening Act,” showcasing DC-based artists and ensembles; “The Green Room,” intimate backstage interviews recorded just before the headline artist takes the stage; “Linger Longer,” WPA’s long-running format of post-concert artist conversations and masterclasses; and more. Although most content will be recorded in advance, each *Home Delivery Plus* package will have a live online premiere in which viewers can chat among themselves and interact with Washington Performing Arts staff and special guests. Each Headline Artist performance will be available online for a limited time following the premiere, with other components remaining on the WPA website for the duration of the series.

Complete details, including subscription packages and pricing, will be announced in early November, with subscriptions going on sale later that month.

ABOUT WASHINGTON PERFORMING ARTS

One of the most established and honored performing arts institutions in America, Washington Performing Arts has engaged for more than half a century with artists, audiences, students, and civic life. The city is truly our stage: for decades, in venues ranging from concert halls and clubs to public parks, we have presented a tremendous range of artists and art forms, from the most distinguished symphony orchestras to both renowned and emerging artists in classical music, jazz, international genres, and more. We also have an ever-expanding artistic and educational presence on the internet, addressing the programming challenges of this time of pandemic while envisioning ongoing opportunities for online connection and community in a post-COVID world.

Washington Performing Arts deeply values its partnerships with local organizations and other arts institutions. Through events online and in myriad performance venues and neighborhoods, we

engage international visiting artists in community programs and introduce local artists to wider audiences. We place a premium on establishing artists as a continuing presence in the lives of both young people and adults through residencies and education programs.

Our achievements have been recognized with a National Medal of Arts and with three Mayor's Arts Awards from the DC Government. We have now embarked upon our second half-century, ever inspired by the motto of our founder, Patrick Hayes: "Everybody in, nobody out."

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