



**WASHINGTON
PERFORMING ARTS**

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CONTACT:

Amanda Sweet/Bucklesweet
(347) 564-3371
amanda@bucklesweet.com

**WASHINGTON PERFORMING ARTS ANNOUNCES
2023 POLA NIRENSKA AWARDS RECIPIENTS**

The annual honors recognize members of the dance community who have made outstanding contributions to the art form, with special consideration to those based in the D.C. region

(Washington, D.C.) – **Washington Performing Arts (WPA)**, in association with the Pola Nirenska Awards Committee, announced today the recipients of the **2023 Pola Nirenska Awards**. Continuing a 20-year-long tradition that celebrates trailblazing members of the dance community, the 2023 honorees are **Ralph Glenmore for Outstanding Achievements in Dance** and **George Jackson for Lifetime Achievement in Dance**.

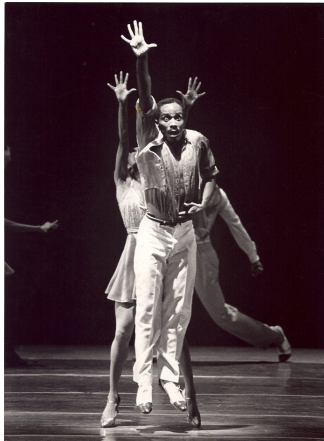
“Pola Nirenska was an artist of tremendous vision, inspiring a generation of dancers and choreographers to follow in her footsteps, literally,” WPA President and CEO Jenny Bilfield said. “The two leaders who are being honored with awards in her name are visionary practitioners, artists, and educators: George Jackson has long been a leading voice in dance performance, scholarship, and journalism, and the Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes his indelible imprint upon our community. Ralph Glenmore is being recognized not only with an award for his Outstanding Achievement in Dance, but also with \$5,000 in support — a rarity in the dance world — to fuel his creativity and work as an artist. We are so fortunate to have them as ambassadors, advocates, and colleagues.”

The Pola Nirenska Dance Awards were established and supported by Dr. Jan Karski in memory of his wife, the illustrious D.C. modern dance teacher and choreographer Pola Nirenska. Karski, a Holocaust witness, courier, and hero, fulfilled Nirenska’s wish to honor individuals who have made an impact on the field of dance locally and oftentimes nationally. Each year, award recipients are chosen by a committee of arts professionals and granted by Washington Performing Arts, reflecting the organization’s commitment to sustain and nurture performing artists. The 2023 Pola Nirenska

Awards Committee members included Committee Chair Dr. Rima Faber, Washington Performing Arts President/CEO, Jenny Bilfield, Stephen Clapp, Jane Raleigh, and Vincent Thomas. The Honorary Committee members are George Jackson, Sali Ann Kriegsmann, and WPA President Emeritus Douglas Wheeler.

ABOUT THE 2023 POLA NIRENSKA AWARDS RECIPIENTS

For Outstanding Achievements in Dance: Ralph Glenmore



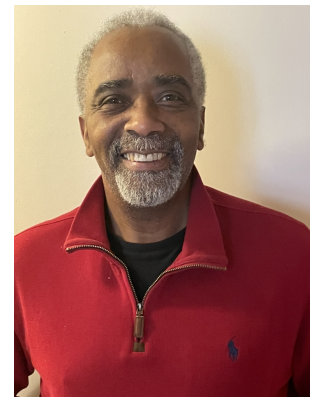
Dancer, choreographer, teacher, artist, and D.C. native **Ralph Glenmore** knew at a very early age that his life would be immersed in the arts. As a young person, he spent much of his free time at the National Gallery of Art and The Smithsonian Institute. He found himself captured by the beauty of the paintings, the murals and the treasures of the cultures of the world. Exposure to massive collections of art and history laid the groundwork for a lifelong career of artistic expression.

“The Award is a validation of a long creative journey,” Glenmore said. “It’s an inspiration to continue participating in the Arts: creating, educating, motivating and learning.”

Glenmore began his formal training as an artist at the age of 16 under the guidance of Czechoslovakian artist, Antonine Shvela. He credits Shvela with teaching him the rigorous technical and formal discipline that has formed the basis of his work. Soon afterwards, he won a Washington D.C. Art Association Scholarship Award, which became a turning point for him.

He joined the D.C. Youth Chorale under the direction of Edward Jackson where he studied the classics and spirituals. With the Chorale, he traveled to Romania and Czechoslovakia as an ambassador of good will. He then joined the D.C. Repertory Theater Company, a theater group that stressed the importance of all the elements of theater; music, acting, dance, set design, lighting and costumes. With this group he began to develop his abilities as a performer in Owen’s Song and Festac Festival in Nigeria, an international art symposium.

He continued his studies at The Duke Ellington School of the Arts, Howard University in Washington D.C. before relocating to New York to attend The Juilliard School.



His Broadway credits include “A Chorus Line,” “Bubblin’ Brown Sugar,” “Reggae” and “L’Orfeo.” Glenmore was a principal dancer with The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater under the direction of Alvin Ailey. He toured the world and worked with choreographers Alvin Ailey, Donald McKayle, Talley Beatty, Judith Jamison, Bill T Jones and Arnie Zane, Billy Wilson, Jennifer Mueller, Ulysses Dove, George Faison, and John Butler.

He was also Resident Dance Supervisor for the Los Angeles Company of Disney's "The Lion King." He has worked as Instructor, Rehearsal Director, Stage Manager and Choreographer with The Lula Washington Dance Theater, The Debbie Allen Dance Academy, The Robinson Project, The Horton Summer Intensive Daytona Community College and Movement of Agape.

Since returning to D.C., he worked with the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, The Dance Institute of Washington, The Duke Ellington School of the Arts, Washington Ballet, Jones and Haywood Dance School, The Kirov Ballet Academy, Dance Place, and as professor of Jazz Dance at American University, Montgomery College, and the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore.

Highlights in Choreography:

American University: "Rocky Horror Show" and "Threepenny Opera"

Dance Place: "What's Going On"

Glenmore is also a visual artist. Examples of his work can be seen online at www.glenmoreart.art

His works cover a diverse spectrum of impressions in a variety of media. There is a remarkable sense of color, composition and theater evident in his paintings. Each piece tells its own story, which the observer is drawn to interpret for themselves.

For Lifetime Achievement in Dance: George Jackson

George Jackson was born in Vienna in 1931. He was a young boy when the German Nazi Party rose to power, and still remembers the experience of Kristallnacht. Soon afterwards, his parents boarded him on a plane, alone, to escape Austria and stay with cousins in London. They eventually joined him and the family moved to Chicago where George grew up.

George saw his first ballet performance at age 14 and fell deeply in love with the art form. He attended every performance he could although, at the University of Chicago he studied sciences and earned a doctorate in microbiology. Throughout his life he maintained a parallel successful career in microbiology while he rose to prominence as a dance historian, researcher, and critic.

Alexander Tomalonis describes his dedication in her publication, DanceView: "Dr. Jackson became a learned dance historian and amassed a substantial personal dance library. He viewed as much dance as physically possible, often watching a matinee in the suburbs, a late afternoon performance in a downtown church basement, then dashing to the Kennedy Center for the evening show. He traveled frequently for his job at the Food and Drug Administration, and then would stop off in two European cities on the way to an international meeting, and two on the way back to keep up with the dance world there." -[Alexander Tomalonis, DanceView, 2022](#) (with permission).

George Jackson's work reviewing dance and writing on the history of dance has appeared in the general media (Washington Post, Washington Star, Times of London Magazine, National Public Radio, Public Broadcasting System TV) as well as in books and specialized dance journals (Dance Magazine, DanceView, Dancing Times, Ballettanz, Cahiers de la danse, et al.) on several continents. He has spoken about dance at New York's Lincoln Center, Washington's Kennedy Center, Vienna's Staatsoper and numerous universities, colleges, and schools. A member of the Dance Critic's Association, he has served in such positions as president, board member, newsletter editor and

conference organizer. He curated “Beyond the Waltz,” the 2006 Austrian dance festival in Washington, DC. He taught dance history and criticism at the Silesian Dance Festival and Workshop and writes for www.danceviewtimes.com, Ballet Review, and Dance Chronicle.

“To be the recipient of the Pola Nirenska award is a rare pleasure,” Jackson said. “The award is testimony that dance survives and so does love. Pola Nirenska and Jan Karski will be remembered as long as her steps are danced.”

ABOUT POLA NIRENSKA



Pola Nirenska was a matriarch of modern dance in Washington, D.C. She helped elevate the art form as a dancer, choreographer, and teacher at a time when it was scarcely known by the general public. Born in Warsaw, Poland in 1910, Pola Nirenska trained at the Mary Wigman School in Dresden and toured the United States in 1932 with the Mary Wigman Dance Company. Ms. Nirenska moved to Vienna for further study with Rosalia Chladek, and then taught and performed in Italy. With fascism dominating continental Europe, she fled to Britain, where she danced for the troops while enduring the Blitz in London. She lost siblings and dozens of other

family members in the Holocaust.

Ms. Nirenska moved to the United States in 1949 and was “discovered” by the pioneering American modern dancer and choreographer Ted Shawn. On the advice of choreographer Doris Humphrey, she moved from New York to Washington, D.C. She met Patrick Hayes, founder of Washington Performing Arts before her retirement in 1969. She returned in 1980 to perform at Glen Echo Dance Theater, the Playhouse Theater in Prince George’s County, Dance Place, and at the Terrace Theater where Washington Performing Arts presented her on May 19, 1988, as part of the City Dance Festival, under the leadership of Doug Wheeler, President Emeritus.

Following her death, her husband, Dr. Jan Karski established the annual Pola Nirenska Awards in 1993 and a memorial performance was presented at the Hartke Theater at Catholic University. The annual awards are presented by the Pola Nirenska Awards Committee and Washington Performing Arts.

ABOUT DR. JAN KARSKI

Jan Karski was born Jan Kozielski in Poland, in 1914. He received a degree in Law and Diplomacy in 1935 and served as a liaison officer of the Polish Underground during World War II. Among the first to relate accounts of the Holocaust to the world, he met with President Roosevelt in 1943 to plead for Allied intervention. His memoir, *Story of a Secret State*, was published in 1944 and became a best-seller. After the war, he earned a Ph.D. and law degree at Georgetown University and served on the faculty of its School of Foreign Service for 40 years. He died in Washington, D.C. in 2000. He was recognized with many honors, including Righteous Among the Nations by Yad

Vashem and the Presidential Medal of Freedom, awarded to him posthumously in 2012. He is also the subject of the play *Remember This: The Lesson of Jan Karski*, currently running at D.C.'s Shakespeare Theatre.

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, envisioning ongoing opportunities for online connection and community.

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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