

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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# **THE HOBBY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS COMMITS TO NEW RESIDENCY INITIATIVE TO UPLIFT LOCAL ARTISTS' WORK**

*2024-25 Season partners include FLY Dance Company, Houston Ebony Opera Guild, and Ana María Martínez with Andy Einhorn*

**Houston, TX – The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts** announced today that after piloting the program in the 2023-24 Season with ISHIDA Dance Company and Urban Souls Dance Company, its new artist residency initiative will be implemented annually with **FLY Dance Company, Houston Ebony Opera Guild, and Ana María Martínez with Andy Einhorn** as 2024-25 Season featured partners.

Building on the Hobby Center's mission to serve as a connector, convenor, and incubator, this program leverages the Hobby Center's technical, administrative, and promotional resources and staff to help extend partners' existing capacities and amplify their work. The resulting performances bring audiences and artists together through experiences that center connection and community.

"Over the years we have built lasting relationships with organizations who have rented our spaces. Now, WE are investing in artists and organizations when we partner with them to present their work on our stages," said Deborah Lugo, Hobby Center Vice President of Programming and Engagement. "We all know the iconic murals and idea that *Houston is Inspired*. The Hobby Center is committed to supporting local artists, providing Houston audiences with new artistic experiences, and strengthening Houston's arts ecosystem."

With extended advance infrastructure support from the Hobby Center team, partner artmakers will participate in a week-long residency at Zilkha Hall to include resources like expert production, technical support, residency stipend, marketing investment, and educational presentations. Each residency will culminate in a public performance at Zilkha Hall, presented by the Hobby Center as part of its annual season.

To kick things off, FLY Dance Company will take the stage this fall with its public performance on Friday, October 4, 2024. FLY alum and US Olympic member for breaking, which recently debuted in the 2024 Summer games, **Jeffrey Louis "BBoy Jeffro"** hits the stage with his piece "PRIMYE", symbolizing championing oneself. Infused with vibes of explosive energy and inspired by Haitian and Hip-Hop roots, this performance celebrates the journey of a champion who honors both heritage and relentless spirit.

"It's been a difficult journey. But slowly we started changing people's view of Hip-Hop, pouring into the youth, then working with symphonies across the US and Canada," said **Jorge Casco**, FLY Dance Company Executive Director. "Now Jeffrey is an Olympian. I can, but I can't believe it. Hip-Hop made this all

possible. Now the Hobby Center is kicking off their residency initiative with FLY... wow, this is what dreams are made of.”

Tickets to FLY Dance Company’s performance are on sale now. Visit [TheHobbyCenter.org](https://TheHobbyCenter.org) for more information.

**FLY Dance Company | I WILL FLY: A New Hip-Hop Experience | Friday, October 4, 2024 at 7:00pm**

FLY Dance seamlessly blends its symphonic heritage with the vibrant energy of Hip-Hop culture, demonstrating that our commonalities far outweigh our differences. Through dance, FLY showcases how love and unity can transcend all boundaries—uniting races, creeds, and nations.

This dance concert will feature new works from acclaimed choreographer **Lorenzo Rennie Harris**, renowned for elevating "social" dances to the "concert" stage. Founder **Kathy Wood** presents her inspiring piece, "Do You Believe," along with selections from her pioneering collaborations with classical orchestras. Additionally, Jorge Casco introduces his piece, “Deeply Rooted,” a compelling fusion of raw Hip-Hop, subtle symphonic elements, and a touch Houston street culture, influenced by both Rennie and Kathy. During the performance, Houston’s own street-artist **GONZO247**, creator of the *Houston is Inspired* murals, will create a brand-new artwork live on stage.

2025 brings Houston Ebony Opera Guild, a company of classical singers sharing opera, traditional Negro Spirituals, and other classical music genres throughout Houston since the 80s, and veteran operatic lyric-spinto and Grammy Award® winning soprano Ana María Martínez with renowned Broadway music director and conductor Andy Einhorn.

More information and on-sale dates for the 2025 spring shows to be released at a later date.

**THE HOBBY CENTER 2024-25 ARTIST RESIDENCY PERFORMANCES:**

**FLY Dance Company | I WILL FLY: A New Hip-Hop Experience | Friday, October 4, 2024 at 7:00pm**

**Houston Ebony Opera Guild | Saturday, April 5, 2025 at 7:30pm**

**Ana María Martínez with Andy Einhorn | Saturday, May 31, 2025 at 7:30pm**

**TICKETING:** Tickets for **I WILL FLY** start at \$25 and are on sale now online at [www.TheHobbyCenter.org](https://www.TheHobbyCenter.org) and in person at the Hobby Center Box Office (800 Bagby, Houston, TX 77002). Discounts available for groups of 10 or more by calling 713-315-2525, option 4. A limited number of \$10 student tickets will be available to purchasers with a valid student ID.

Patrons can become a “Hobby Center Insider” by signing up at [thehobbycenter.org/news/stay-connected](https://thehobbycenter.org/news/stay-connected) where they receive perks such as access to purchase tickets before the general public.

**ABOUT FLY DANCE COMPANY**

FLY Dance Company’s origins trace back to founder and Artistic Director Kathy Wood, a dance educator with over 40 years of experience. In 1993, Kathy discovered a group of street dancers at the Westheimer Street Festival in Houston, TX, who were in need of a rehearsal space. She invited them to her home studio, where she began collaborating with them, combining their hip-hop style with classical music and tuxedo coats for local performances.

FLY Dance Company has made a significant impact, performing at prestigious venues such as Washington's Kennedy Center, Miller Outdoor Theatre, Jacob’s Pillow, Lincoln Center, and Bob Hope Theater. In 2005, they stood out as the only hip-hop dance company invited to the Vail International Ballet Festival, further cementing their unique place in the dance world. The company is renowned for being one of the few hip-hop groups performing with symphonies across the U.S. They have partnered with prestigious orchestras including the Baltimore Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, Charlotte Symphony, Cleveland Pops Orchestra, Florida Symphony Orchestra, Toledo Symphony, Fort Worth Symphony, and Victoria Symphony, among others.

In addition to their symphonic performances, FLY has served as educational ambassadors for the U.S. State Department, bringing their programs and performances to over 20 countries. Notably, they completed a 25-city tour across Germany and Hungary in 2019.

With a rebranded identity as "The Gentlemen of Hip Hop," FLY Dance Company has revitalized its image and repertoire, earning standing ovations and paving the way for a future filled with innovative and exciting performances.

**The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts** serves as a connector, convenor and incubator for all Houston audiences, artmakers and arts organizations. Opened in 2002, the campus houses two theaters including the 2,650-seat Sarofim Hall and the 500-seat Zilkha Hall. Delivering a best-in-class patron experience, the Hobby Center welcomes over 500,000 audience members annually to engage with high-quality arts programming including the Memorial Hermann Broadway at the Hobby Center series. The Hobby Center is also home to a full season of musical theatre produced by Principal Resident Company Theatre Under the Stars, as well as a variety of diverse performances from both Houston-based and touring artists and companies. Education and accessibility initiatives are central to the Hobby Center's impact in Houston through programs like the ExxonMobil Discovery Series that welcomes thousands of students to free performances every season. Please visit [TheHobbyCenter.org](http://TheHobbyCenter.org). Follow the Hobby Center on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

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