

Document Citation

Title	'Dance Black America' featured on PBS 'Great Performances'
Author(s)	
Source	<i>Pennebaker Associates</i>
Date	1985 Jan 02
Type	press release
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	3
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Dance Black America, Hegedus, Chris, 1985

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"DANCE BLACK AMERICA" FEATURED ON PBS "GREAT PERFORMANCES"

FRIDAY, JANUARY 25th, 1985 AT 9PM

Companies of Alvin Ailey, Charles Moore and others,
Filmed in Performance By Pennebaker and Hegedus;
Produced by SUNY and Pennebaker Associates

On Friday, January 25th, 1985 at 9pm, (ET), "DANCE BLACK AMERICA", a ninety minute celebration of black dance, filmed by D.A. Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus and produced by the State University of New York, (SUNY), Programs in the Arts, in conjunction with Pennebaker Associates, Inc., will air on "Great Performances" over PBS. Filmed in performance at a four day festival of black dance held at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) during April 1983, "DANCE BLACK AMERICA" profiles key forces in the development of black dance from The Magnificent Force team of break dancers to the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

"As we were filming I was struck by two different elements at work -- first and foremost 'DANCE BLACK AMERICA' is simply compelling entertainment -- lots of exciting dance by great artists. On another level the film chronicles the struggles and triumphs of black dance and its most important choreographers and dancers," remarked filmmaker D.A. Pennebaker.

Narrated by Geoffrey Holder, "DANCE BLACK AMERICA" brings to television the best of black dance through the years -- both concert dance by leading black choreographers, and the street and social dance that traces its roots to Africa. SUNY, through its statewide office of Programs in the Arts, co-produced the television special as well as the DANCE BLACK AMERICA Festival. Patty Kerr Ross, Executive Director of SUNY's Programs in the Arts and co-producer of "DANCE BLACK AMERICA", recently commented, " I believe our television projects are unique instances of a university system producing cultural programming for American and European broadcast.

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It is our hope that the "DANCE BLACK AMERICA" film will bring to the public attention -- as did the Festival -- the powerful contribution that black Americans have made to modern culture."

The following are featured on the television special:

- ** The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performing Louis Johnson's tongue-in-cheek ballet, "FONTESSA AND FRIENDS", starring Donna Wood and Gary Deloach in the leading roles;
- ** The Charles Moore Dance Theater performing the haunting "SHANGO", Katherine Dunham's 1945 Caribbean dance of ritual possession, and Charles Moore performing "OSTRICH", a traditional dance of Africa choreographed by Asadata Dafora and reconstructed by Moore;
- ** The Mama Lu Parks Jazz Dancers in a rousing tribute to the Lindy Hop;
- ** Eleo Pomare dancing his electrifying "JUNKIE" from "BLUES FOR THE JUNGLE", a dance that was forbidden in Holland when it was first performed;
- ** Renowned tap dancer Chuck Green of the famed vaudeville team "Chuck and Chuckles";
- ** The Magnificent Force, a team of breakdancers and the Double Dutch champions, The Jazzy Jumpers;
- ** Chuck Davis and his Afro-American dance company performing dance of West Africa;
- ** Al Perryman dancing his own reconstruction of the nearly forgotten magic of Earl "Snakehips" Tucker, reviving memories of the jazzy 1930's and
- ** the first filmed appearance of Garth Fagan's acclaimed Bucket Dance Theater from Rochester, New York performing "FROM BEFORE", an elegant modern dance infused with the dance movements of Fagan's native Jamaica.

The filmmaking team of D.A. Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus have directed and produced numerous productions both here and abroad. Their recent film "ROCKABY", aired on PBS and produced by SUNY's Programs in the Arts, is an account of the rehearsals and opening of a new Samuel Beckett play.

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It features British actress Billie Whitelaw, who won an Obie for that role, and the late Alan Schneider in one of his last directorial efforts.

Among their other productions are a portrait of auto tycoon John DeLorean; "Town Bloody Hall", a no-holes barred account of the night Norman Mailer took on the forces of women's liberation and "The Energy War", a five hour series recounting one of the longest legislative battles in American political history.

Pennebaker's films of Bob Dylan's 1965 British tour, "Dont Look Back" and "Monterey Pop", a musical account of the 1967 Monterey International Pop Festival, were models for a whole new genre of performance films, one of the latest of which is his own "Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars" starring David Bowie. As half of the renowned partnership of Leacock Pennebaker, Inc., Pennebaker was a pioneer in the early cinéma vérité movement. His first film "Daybreak Express", an impressionistic train ride set to music by Duke Ellington, was recently selected by the National Endowment for the Arts for theatrical showing throughout the country.

"DANCE BLACK AMERICA" is a presentation of WNET/THIRTEEN, New York, in association with WETA/Washington, D.C. "Great Performances" is presented by the Great Performances Alliance: WNET/THIRTEEN, New York; KERA, Dallas-Ft. Worth; KQED, San Francisco; SCETV, Columbia, S.C. and WTTW, Chicago. Coordinating Producer of "Great Performances" is Yvonne Smith; Executive Producer, Jac Venza.

~~For more information contact: Roslyn Ray 212/562-2016 at~~

~~WNET/THIRTEEN, NEW YORK.~~

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