

For Immediate Release: September 20, 2024, **updated October 1**
[Cal Performances Press Room](#)



Photos of *Step Afrika!* are available for download from the Cal Performances [Press Room](#).
A video trailer for Step Afrika!'s *The Migration: Reflections on Jacob Lawrence* can be found on [YouTube](#).

**CAL PERFORMANCES AT UC BERKELEY PRESENTS
A FEATURED PERFORMANCE IN THE 2024–25
ILLUMINATIONS “FRACTURED HISTORY” SERIES**

STEP AFRIKA!

THE MIGRATION:

REFLECTIONS ON JACOB LAWRENCE

SATURDAY–SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 2–3 AT ZELLERBACH HALL

Berkeley, CA, September 20, 2024, updated October 1—Cal Performances at UC Berkeley presents the return engagement of Washington DC’s celebrated step dance company, **Step Afrika!**, in *The Migration: Reflections on Jacob Lawrence* on Saturday, November 2 at 8pm and Sunday, November 3 at 3pm at Zellerbach Hall. An audience favorite, with sold-out shows for past Berkeley visits, Step Afrika! recognizes its 30th anniversary this season with a production steeped in Black culture and history. Based on visual artist Jacob Lawrence’s iconic paintings, *The Migration* tells the story of the Great Migration (the relocation of more than 7 million Black Americans from the rural South to the

cities of the North, Midwest, and West from 1916–1970). In his series of 60 panels from 1940–41 titled *The Migration of the Negro*, Lawrence depicted the migration experience of individuals, families, and communities in a modernist style and with a distinctive earth-tone color palette. Step Afrika! dramatizes Lawrence’s evocative imagery in a powerful production that combines movement with bold visual art and vivid theatricality. The performance is part of Cal Performances’ *Illuminations*: “Fractured History” programming for the 2024–25 season.

Tracing a historical arc from Africa to the post–Civil War South to a new life in the North, he choreography in *The Migration* is expressed through stepping—a percussive, highly-energetic art form first developed through the song and dance rituals performed by African-American fraternities and sororities—mixed with tap, body percussion, and modern dance. In stepping, the body becomes an instrument, using footsteps, claps, and spoken word to produce complex polyrhythms. The costumes, lighting, and choreography in *The Migration* are all drawn directly from Lawrence’s artwork, creating the illusion that the painted images come to life with each new scene—as if the dancers are emerging from the artist’s two-dimensional panels. A historically resonant soundtrack follows this trajectory, and includes music by Nina Simone and John Coltrane, as well as gospel music and West African drumming.

The event is one of eight *Illuminations* performances this season that are combined with additional public and classroom programs. Through this “Fractured History” series, Cal Performances investigates collective memory and the complex evolution of historical narratives to consider what role the performing arts might play in restoring nuance to our understanding of the past, and how that understanding shapes our present and future. Visit calperformances.org/illuminations-2024-25 for more information.

Step Afrika! will also give a SchoolTime performance specially designed for K-12 students on Monday, November 4 at 11am. **This presentation is already sold out, but registration and more information about other SchoolTime programming** can be found at calperformances.org/k-12.

On Sunday, November 3 at 3pm, Cal Performances will offer live audio descriptions of the performance and a **pre-performance haptic access tour** for blind and visually impaired audience members. The live audio description is spoken by a professional audio describer through a wireless headset system and is designed to provide clear and engaging descriptions of the meaningful visual

details of a performance. **Haptic access tours allow patrons to experience—through touch and movement— the space, performers, costumes, and objects in addition to key movement elements in the performance. Headsets and a space on the tour may be reserved when purchasing tickets** or by contacting the Cal Performances Ticket Office at (510) 642-9988 or tickets@calperformances.org. Additional information about services available for patrons with disabilities can be found at calperformances.org/accessibility.

CALENDAR EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Saturday, November 2, 8pm

Sunday, November 3, 3pm

Zellerbach Hall

Bancroft Way at Dana Street,
UC Berkeley campus

Dance

Step Afrika!

The Migration: Reflections on Jacob Lawrence

Program:

Washington DC's celebrated step dance company recognizes its 30th anniversary with a production that tells the story of the Great Migration through Black dance forms, bold visual art, and vivid theatricality. *The Migration* is based on Jacob Lawrence's famous series of paintings from the early 1940s that explored the Black American migration experience in a modernist style and with a distinctive earth-tone color palette. Set to a soundtrack that includes music by Nina Simone and John Coltrane, gospel music, and West African drumming, the movement traces a historical arc from Africa to the post-Civil War South to a new life in the North, the choreography, a mix of stepping, tap, body percussion, and modern dance.

An Illuminations: "Fractured History" event. Visit calperformances.org/illuminations for details.

On Sunday, November 3 at 3pm, Cal Performances will offer live audio descriptions of the performance and a pre-performance haptic tour for blind and visually impaired audience members. Headsets and a space on the tour may be reserved when purchasing tickets or by contacting the Cal Performances Ticket Office at (510) 642-9988 or tickets@calperformances.org.

Tickets: \$42–98 (prices subject to change). UC Berkeley students can access exclusive discounts, including half-price tickets in all sections of the theater. More information about student tickets and discounts is available at calperformances.org/ucb-students.

Tickets for all performances are available at calperformances.org, by phone at (510) 642-9988, or in person at the Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall, Tuesday–Friday, 12–5:30pm and Saturday–Sunday, 1–5pm. For information about discounts, visit calperformances.org/discounts.

###

PRESS CONTACT

Louisa Spier

Cal Performances

(510) 643-6714

lspier@calperformances.org