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## Ray Mercer

Ray Mercer is a native of Omaha, NE, and started his dance training at the University of New Orleans. He is presently in his 18th year as a dancer and fight captain in Disney's *The Lion King* on Broadway. Other Performance credits include projects with Garth Fagan, George Faison, Aretha Franklin, Kevin Iga Jeff, Luis Johnson, Rod Stewart, and two years on the national tour of *The Lion King*, as well as Chicago's *Deeply Rooted Dance Theater* (company member), and *Boston Ballet* (guest artist).

Throughout his tenure on Broadway, Mercer has also donated his time to create works for various initiatives within the Broadway Cares/Equity Fights Aids (Dancers Responding to AIDS, Fire Island Dance Festival, Red Bucket Follies, and more). His presentations earned the coveted 'Best Onstage Presentation Award' a record ten times, making him the most celebrated choreographer at BCEFA's annual fundraising events, which raise millions of dollars each year to provide support to members of the theatre community. This accomplishment, coupled with creations for premiere dance companies (AileyII, Dallas Black Dance Theatre, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, New Jersey Ballet, the Pensacola Ballet, Philadanco), landed him among New York City's most innovative, multiskilled director/choreographers. He was the creative director and choreographer for the *Harlem Globetrotter's Spread Game Tour*.

A dynamic virtuosic mover, Ray walks in the legacy of Black dance progenitors, carrying both the historical and vanguard in his body. He uncannily facile in creating work that surprises and delights. His ability to lead in partnership with the dancers forges space for them to execute movements that they previously thought impossible. This excitement adds to the infectious, disarming expression that characterizes his body of work

Ray Mercer is the choreographer for the Ailey School's Professional Division and resident choreographer for Philadanco. He is the Artist in Residence at Omaha Performing Arts, and tall poPpy Artists. The Smithsonian Museum commissioned and archived his work *Hamdan: Through The Gate of Tears*. Rays theatrical contributions include work as the choreographer of *Rent* at ACT of CT, *Jersey Boys* at Theater Aspen, *Dream Girls* at Omaha Playhouse, *Ain't MisBehavin* Omaha Playhouse and *Deep Love: A Ghostly Rock Opera* at The New York Musical Theatre Festival. In *Our America*, directed by Liesl Tommy for Broadway for Biden.