MARIA TORRES

Choreographer / Director / Dancer / Master Teacher

PRESS KIT

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Maria Torres O'Connor ~ Biography

> "My father played the congas and on Saturdays my mom would cook and then we would spend the rest of the evening, all five of us, dancing. The music and the dancing was a norm, and I knew young that I wanted to be a performer," says Maria Torres of her early years.

From the young age of thirteen, Maria was dancing professionally and has earned an award-winning reputation that has propelled her prosperous career in theater, film, television, video and commercial industries. Her extensive honors include the 2008 Choreography Media Honor for the hit TV show "So You Think You Can Dance," dozens of titles in American Style Rhythm ballroom divisions, the World Champion in Hustle, the Latin Style Music Award, the Desi Arnaz Entertainment Awards, among others.

Maria has worked with celebrities Jennifer Lopez, Vanessa Williams, Andre Benjamin from OUTKAST, John Leguizamo, Mario Lopez, Elizabeth Pena, Patrick Dempsey, Amy Adams, Enrique Iglesias, Tim Allen, Epatha Merkerson, Jenna Elfman, Andie McDowell and Raven-Symone among others.

As a performer, Maria starred in the Broadway Musical *Swing!* and choreographed the *Lou Bega Gala* and *Easter Extravaganza* at Radio City Music Hall. One of her first jobs was performing with the legendary Cuban singer Celia Cruz at Madison Square Garden. Off-Broadway, Maria has choreographed the Off-Broadway musical hit *Celia* (about Cuban singer Celia Cruz) currently on US and World tour, *The Donkey Show, 4 Guys Named Jose, Latin Heat, Best of Both Worlds, and Disney's Golden Mickeys.* In the commercial industry, she choreographed the national campaigns for Stayfree and Burger King, choreographed for Panasonic, Budweiser, and Seagrams, and is currently the spokesperson for PepsiCo's Moms on the Move campaign along with Mario Lopez and LaChanze.

Maria's feature film credits include choreographing Disney's *College Road Trip* with Roger Kumble and starring Martin Lawrence and Raven Simone, Disney's *Enchanted* starring Patrick Dempsey and Susan Sarandon, *Dance With Me* starring Vanessa Williams, Chayanne and Kris Kristofferson, *El Cantante* starring Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony, *Sueño* starring John Leguizamo and Elizabeth Peña (premiered at The Latino Film Festival), Universal/HBO's *Idlewild* with Hilton Battle and starring Outkast and Terrence Howard, and *The Six Wives of Henry Le Fay* due out Fall 2008.

In the music industry, Maria was featured and interviewed on MTV for a Latin & hustle video, choreographed HOT 97 radio Top *Latin Freestyle Music Artist*, co-choreographed the music video for Enrique Iglesias' hit single *Bailamos*, the concert tour King of Kings for hailed Reggaeton artist Don Omar's, *Salio el Sol's* video, and Jennifer Lopez's special performance in Portugal.

Maria studied dance throughout the tri-state area at the Alvin Ailey School as well as the studios of Phil Black and Frank Hatchet among others. She received a scholarship from the Manhattan Fred Astaire Dance studios who sponsored her to represent them in national competitions, winning numerous titles in the ballroom, Hustle and Swing circuits.

Maria has been actively involved in her community, serving as the Co-Chairperson of Lincoln Center's *Midsummer Night Swing* series, choreographer for *NY's Shakespeare in the Park*, Co-Producer and President of *Hustle USA Dance Championships*, and Director, Choreographer, and Host for the *Pathmark Hispanic Arts Festival* (a dance and Latin culture educational program for children & adults used in the NY schools' curriculum). Maria founded the *Hustle USA Dance Championship,* an event whose format has been widely copied.

As a master teacher, Maria has taught all over the world at prestigious dance institutions including Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Dance Theatre of Harlem and Broadway Dance Center. Most recently, she is featured on podcastGO with her globally broadcast *World of Dance* lessons and is a coach and choreographer to teachers and industry professionals.

Maria's future projects include directing and choreographing her brainchild musical *Latin Heat,* and choreographing *Cheer*, a new theatre piece being produced by Marc Routh, Richard Frankel, Tom Viertel, Steve Baruch and Broadway Asia.