



# ADESOLA OSAKALUMI

Actor • Choreographer • Singer • Dancer

## Biography

**Adesola Osakalumi** (pronounced *ah-day-SHOW-la* • *O-sa-ka-LU-mee*) is an award-winning actor, choreographer, singer, and dancer whose talents have garnered him successes in film, television, and stage. He currently stars as the lead in the national tour of the Broadway hit musical *FELA!*, which won three Tony Awards in 2010. In 2009, Adesola was a member of the ensemble cast when the ground-breaking musical made its Broadway debut. He was also the understudy for Fela and played opposite Pattie LaBelle during the production's Broadway run. In 2011, he became an alternate lead during the first national tour and then took the helm as lead, to rave reviews, when the musical returned to Broadway summer 2012. Prior to *FELA!*, Adesola was cast in the highly acclaimed revival of *Equus* with Daniel Radcliffe. As an actor, Adesola can also be seen in the films *Sex and the City 2*; *The Accidental Husband* (with Uma Thurman); *Crazy Beats Strong*, an award-winning short film featured at The Sundance Film Festival; and in *Ngwino Ubeho* at The Sundance Theater Lab. For his work as an actor or dancer, Ade (as he is called by his friends) has been favorably reviewed or profiled in *The New York Times*, *The New York Daily News*, VIBE.com, BlackActors.net, ESSENCE.com, *Jamaica Observer*, *The Crisis Magazine*, and many other media outlets.

It was through dance that Ade made his first big mark on the stage and he has come to be highly regarded among his peers as a leader in the world of hip hop dance. He has the distinction of having co-created and co-directed the Off-Broadway hit *Jam on the Groove*, the first ever hip hop theater production (which received a Drama Desk Award nomination for Best Choreography). Ade is also co-founder of the legendary GhettoOriginal Productions Dance Company. His work has earned him a Bessie Award, a Drama Desk Award nomination, and funding from the National Endowment for the Arts. As a dancer, his select appearances include the films *Across The Universe*, *Enchanted*, *Idlewild*, ABC Television's *Double Platinum* (with Brandy and Diana Ross), *Louis/The Great Observer*, *MTV Music Video Awards*, *The TODAY Show*, and the *American Music Awards*.

Choreographic credits include the films *School of Rock* and *Marci X*; for the stage, *Centrifugal Force* at Lincoln Center's *Out of Doors* (where he served as Artistic Director/Co-Choreographer); *Eyewitness Blues* for New York Theatre Workshop; *Mister* at the NY Fringe Festival and New York Theatre Workshop; and *Hip Hop Wonderland* with Bill Irwin at The New Victory Theatre. Adesola has also choreographed or danced in several commercials or upfronts for Target, American Express, Panasonic, PBS Kids, Old Navy, ESPN, Fox TV

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Advil, Levi 501 Jeans, Halifax Bank, Merck, NV Energy, SAP, and several other companies all over the world. For celebrities such as **Usher, Mariah Carey, Sean “Diddy” Combs, Joe, N’Sync**, Ade has also worked as a choreographer and/or featured dancer for their videos.

Ade’s fascination with dance began as a child. The Bronx, New York native was surrounded and heavily influenced by the art form at an early age. His mother was a principle dancer with Africa I Dance Theater, a touring company founded by his uncles and subsequently joined by his father. The company’s mission (to perpetuate African dance and culture throughout the U.S. and beyond) would later fuel Adesola’s motivation to dance, choreograph, and teach. He studied briefly with the Dance Theater of Harlem and while there on scholarship he learned to integrate natural ability with routine and regiment. He’d come to master the many vocabularies of dance. Though respected by many of his peers in the dance industry as the “best all-around dancer,” Ade cut his teeth in hip hop.

Growing up, Adesola was determined to be one of the best *poppers* and *lockers* on the scene (popping and locking are forms of “urban social dance” that originated from hip hop culture but have African roots). That wish came true when he was selected to be a part of Rhythm Technicians – a dance crew made up of some of hip hop’s best known *B-Boys*. “Being a part of the Rhythm Technicians was like going to Master School,” Adesola recalls. The group gained great popularity in New York by performing regularly throughout the city. While with Rhythm Technicians, Adesola won a Bessie Award and two choreographic grants from the National Endowment for the Arts.

The group later morphed into the GhettoOriginals Productions Dance Company (GPDC), the undisputed pioneers of hip hop theater. As a co-founder of GPDC, Adesola helped hip hop dance make a permanent impression on commercial theater. In addition to being the first hip hop dance group to feature at the esteemed Colorado Dance Festival, GPDC also created the groundbreaking dance production, *Jam on the Groove*. The production premiered Off-Broadway at the Minetta Lane Theater in November 1995 and won a Drama Desk Award nomination for Best Choreography. *Jam* went on to tour the US, Europe, South America, and Asia to rave reviews.

When available, Adesola teaches and lectures about this craft. “I get as much out of teaching dance as my students,” Ade says. “It’s exciting to see how theater and dance can change lives. I have seen it instill confidence in people from all walks of life, all ages. It allows for a liberating experience with life...unlike anything I’ve seen.” Ade’s personable and friendly disposition makes him a favorite with students around the world. He has taught at places as distinct as the Urban Assembly of Music and Art in Brooklyn, the International TANZWOCHEN in Vienna, and the Artcaval Festival in Paris. He has also taught Master Classes with *Darrin Henson’s Dance Grooves*. In leadership, Adesola has served as Artistic Director for *Hip Hop Kung Fu* at The Asia Society (featuring hip hop artists from Japan, China, and the US), a Board Member of *Dancing in the Streets*, and is a choreographic mentor for Pentacle.