



NEWS RELEASE

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Ethiopian master dancer Melaku Belay to perform, talk with BCPS students from Addis Ababa on Thursday, April 29

*Free virtual performance part of World Culture in Context series coordinated by
BCPS and Creative Alliance*

Towson, MD -- [Melaku Belay](#), a world-renowned Ethiopian dancer and an ambassador for Ethiopia's music and dance, will join with Baltimore County Public Schools students on Thursday, April 29, at 8:35 a.m. on [Zoom](#). The event will be open to all. (If needed, the meeting ID number is 818 8321 6458 and the passcode is 019248.)

Please note that students using Chromebooks can access this Zoom event. After clicking the link to enter the event, they should not choose to "Add Zoom to Chrome," but instead they should choose to "Join from Your Browser" and later to "Join Audio by Computer."

Belay, who will be speaking from Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, is being featured as part of the World Culture in Context initiative. This unique program connects students to renowned artists from across the globe performing in the places that have profoundly informed their work, accompanied by virtual, live conversations about creativity, belonging, and culture. The series was launched in November 2020 by the BCPS Office of Social Studies and BCPS Office of Career and Technical Education and Fine Arts and the Baltimore-based [Creative Alliance](#).

Melaku Belay is the founding director of Fendika Cultural Center and the founding president of the Ethiopian Dance Art Association. Belay was celebrated as a finalist for the 2018 Ye Bego Sew Award (Ethiopian Person of the Year) in the category of raising global awareness of Ethiopian culture. Belay's

international honors include a 2015 Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres (France), a 2019 Visa for Music Award (Morocco), and a 2020 Prince Claus Award (the Netherlands).

Belay is a contemporary virtuoso interpreter of the Ethiopian *eskista* dance, characterized by rolling the shoulder blades, bouncing the shoulders, and tilting the chest. His spectacular mastery of eskista has earned him the nicknames of “[walking earthquake](#)” and “King of Eskista.”

Previous World Culture in Context performances featured the gospel group [The Legendary Ingramettes](#), broadcasting from Virginia; celebrated percussionist [Kim So Ra](#), broadcasting from Seoul, South Korea; renowned bluesman [Jontavious Willis](#), broadcasting from Georgia; and master throat singer [Bady-Dorzhu Ondar](#), broadcasting from Siberia, Russia.

(Editor’s note: A photo of Melaku Belay accompanies this release.)

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[Baltimore County Public Schools](#), the nation’s 25th largest school system, is focused on raising the bar and closing gaps to prepare our students for the future. Thanks to innovative and talented leaders, teachers, staff, and students, BCPS celebrates [many honors](#).