Lula Washington, is Founder and Artistic Director of the Lula Washington Dance Theatre (LWDT) and Founding Member of the International Association of Blacks in Dance. Lula founded LWDT in 1980 with her husband Erwin Washington to provide a creative outlet for minority dance artists in the inner city of Los Angeles, CA. Today, Lula and her Company are revered across the United States and around the world. The Company has danced in over 150 cities in the United States, as well as abroad in Germany, Spain, Kosovo, Mexico, Canada, China, and Russia. Lula graduated UCLA with a Masters degree in dance and became one of the school’s most successful dance department graduates. She also founded a dance school that offers high quality training for inner-city youth. The school’s motto is, “I Do Dance, Not Drugs.” She not only trains students to dance, but, to build qualities that will aid them in navigating through life. Her community engagement and activism has brought her more than three dozen awards. Lula is admired as a teacher, leader, dancer, and choreographer with a very unique style and approach to dance. Stylistically, Lula fuses African and Afro-Haitian dance. She also incorporates the dance styles of gospel church, classical ballet, modern, street, theatrical, hip hop, while drawing from various ideas and issues. Her works have been praised by critics for their strong political and social commentary, as well as their avant-garde composition and their roots in African-American culture.

Lula is able to make use of her dance studio, company members, students and teachers for major projects, including her most recent accomplishment, AVATAR. In preparation for AVATAR, Director James Cameron asked Lula how his Na Vi people might greet each other and move. Lula suggested that he use the “third eye – I See You” concept with one hand touching the center of the forehead and then extending away. Her idea became a central focus to the film. Lula spent 2007 and 2008 creating cultural/ritual movements including war scenes, hunting and large dance sequences for the motion capture technology. Lula has received numerous awards and honors. She was the first woman to earn the Minerva Award from the State of California and First Lady Maria Shriver. Lula’s works have been commissioned by major foundations and dance presenting institutions, including the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the James Irvine Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and AT&T. Lula’s awards include the 2007 “Carter G. Woodson Civil Rights Award” from the National Education Association” for her “Reflections In Black” school performance program; the “2009 Uncommon Angel Award” from the LA Commons organization for “transforming the face of Crenshaw Boulevard” by relocating her dance studio there; and the $25,000 Rosenfeld Prize from UCLA for bringing “Reflections In Black” to thousands of school children annually at UCLA Royce Hall. Lula also shared the “Integrity Award” with actress Loretta Devine at the L.A. Women’s Theater Festival in 2007. Lula was also chosen by actress Jane Seymour to be part of her Red Dress Project, formed to bring attention to the issue of heart disease among women and encouraging women to fight the disease by staying active. Jane Seymour’s representation of Lula in her painting celebrates dance, specifically African dance, as an activity that can help build healthy hearts.

Lula has dozens of other accolades including the 2003 “Lady of Wisdom Lifetime Achievement Award” from the from the Modie Bell Senior Citizen’s Foundation; the 2002 “Master of the Arts Award” presented by Recycling Black Dollars for her tireless commitment to dance; the 2001 “Lifetime Achievement Award, presented by the Performing Artists in Schools Association for her work to bring dance into classrooms at public schools; the 2001 “Educator of the Year Award” presented at the 7th Annual American Choreography Awards Gala; the 2001 “KET Celebrating The Women of Our Community” Award; the 2000 “Lifetime Achievement Award” presented at Dance Fest 2000 for her concert dance work in Los Angeles; and the 2000 “Lester Horton Award for Sustained Achievement” presented by the The Dance Resource Center in recognition of her 20 years of continuous excellence in dance in Los Angeles.