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# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## RIP Geoffrey Holder

Sarah Elgart · Wednesday, October 8th, 2014

This past Sunday (October 5, 2014) we lost a great Modern Renaissance Man. Born in Trinidad on August 1, 1930, **Geoffrey Holder** was an extraordinarily talented choreographer, dancer, director, actor, painter, costume designer, and more. Known to most Americans as the star and spokesperson for 7 Up's "uncola" commercials and later as a villainous henchman in the James Bond film "Live and Let Die", he had a larger than life personality embellished by his lilting, sing song accent and a voice that oozed warmth and good humor.

Discovered in 1952 by Agnes De Mille while dancing in St. Thomas, Holder was invited to New York where he soon made a career for himself, teaching at Katherine Dunham's school, dancing on Broadway and in the Metropolitan Opera Ballet, and by 1957 starring in an all black production of *Waiting for Godot*. He went on to create choreography for such companies as Alvin Ailey and Dance Theater of Harlem. On stage Geoffrey strived to "*create magic*", and he became the first black man to be nominated and win two Tony Awards, for direction and costume design for *The Wiz*. All of this was no small miracle given that Geoffrey Holder had to overcome both dyslexia and a severe stutter.