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LES TWINS



Q & A

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“MOVE OUT LOUD” – INTERVIEW WITH LES TWINS

Hennessy Very Special is excited to collaborate with the world-renowned urban movement phenomenon known professionally as Les Twins. Laurent and Larry Bourgeois are recognized internationally for their new-style hip-hop dancing and their captivating, energy-filled freestyles. Born and raised in the projects in Sarcelles, north of Paris, identical twins Larry and Laurent made a splash in their early teens by taking their unique style of dance to the streets of Paris in order to earn a living//to earn pocket money. That splash quickly became waves that broke across the Parisian street dance scene. Self-taught talents, they drew inspiration from what was in the air and on the airwaves, picking up classical moves and incorporating them into their repertoire to light up dance floors with their freestyles. Soon, their renown had spread well beyond the Parisian underground. In 2008, they shot to fame as finalists on the TV show Incroyable Talent, the French version of the “Got Talent” franchise. Two years later, a US breakout came when a video of their World of Dance performance in San Diego went viral, earning more than 50 million views to date. Shortly after, they went from dancing on the streets of Paris to sharing a stage with Beyoncé as the only male dancers on “The Mrs. Carter Show World Tour.” After two consecutive world tours with Beyoncé, they continued to captivate audiences worldwide by joining Beyoncé and Jay-Z on the OTR tour. During a brief break in those world tours, they managed to sweep season one of Jennifer Lopez’s World of Dance competition on the TV channel NBC. Today, their flair for freestyle dance, fashion, acting and producing have garnered international renown. Yet, Les Twins continue to hone their art as they always have. Together, Les Twins continue to innovate on the street culture scene with their unique Intuition, inventing new moves and paving new paths with every step.



Your story is like something out of the movies: you've gone from street dancers to icons, from the projects to TV, Hollywood and millions of followers. How did it happen?

Larry: That's a never-ending question! It's about who we are, where we come from and what we became through dance.

Laurent: The love of dance runs in our family: our roots are strong — we're the last of 11 siblings, and when you're from Guadeloupe, you know how to dance! Our mother was a singer and a dancer; everyone in our family has their own dance style. But in Sarcelles, being twins and dancers hasn't always been an advantage. There are lots of reasons why we've never stopped moving. Our life has given us a lot, physically, to express through dance but it goes beyond movement. We have a lot to say.

What was it like to grow up in Sarcelles, and how did you get your big break?

Laurent: When you're born a twin, you're already a star in a way. We always knew we were different. Dance was our way of being different and not just expressing it through clothes or money. After school, we worked in odd jobs, but I really believed we were destined for bigger things so I pushed Larry to quit so we could dream big and try our luck.

Larry: One night, we showed up and danced on the Champs-Élysées. Alicia Keys saw us and we performed with her the next day in Paris. That's how it started. Then we saved up and flew to New York and danced in Times Square, which is where Jay-Z and Beyoncé spotted us and we danced in her world tour. Then came modeling, acting and singing.

You've been labeled "creators of street movement." How do you define yourselves?

We've always been that, but as the world changes and we grow it's become so much more than that. What we create is emotion, art, a street spirit. It's like an osmosis, a mix: we "dance" our life. Our movement is what makes us unique, it's like a digital fingerprint — it's a style and a signature, our DNA.

You're identical twins. What's your relationship like?

Laurent: We're identical but different in life, in our personalities and in dance. We're like yin and yang. When we dance together, the power is incredible — people even cry! Each of us is strong on our own, but together we are unique.

Larry: We bring together two totally different dreams. We succeeded in leveling up to go wherever we want, to open doors that never would have been open to us before. Les Twins are unique, but there's also a lot more to us — together and individually — than meets the eye.

How does the love of movement define you?

When we realized that dance could take us so far, we decided to incorporate into it a little bit of everything else it touches — video, personal style, music, staging, producing. We never do anything by halves. We both want to be the best. And thanks to a little brotherly competition and rivalry, we evolve a little more every day. Movement lets us transform emotion — everything we've experienced, everything we are is right there in our moves.

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How do you work and dance together?

Instinct. It doesn't mean we always agree! Since we're together 24/7, dance is always a part of it. We feel the music, we get inspiration from our life, our stories, and we take our cues from each other. We live life like a dance: each step is important. Intuitively, we always know what the other is feeling. Sometimes even we are astonished by our connection! In our videos everything is improvised, we could never reproduce any of it. It's a moment, it's life, it's instinct. The one constant is that we always give our best, push ourselves to go further, and wind up someplace totally unexpected.

How are your dreams different?

Laurent: I don't have any, we realize them all so fast! Since the age of 16, there hasn't been a single dream that we didn't realize right away.
Larry: Every day is a new dream. Dance raises the bar for everyone, and we want people everywhere to recognize us through movement.

How would you describe your savoir-faire? Are words even enough?

We live life like dance steps. We're always saying that every move is important. Dance is about being right there in the moment, it's about life and instinct — we don't over-think it. You get the sense it's the same for Hennessy.

Hennessy VS is a brand that's always on the move: its slogan is Never Stop, Never Settle. That seems to apply to you, too.

We don't sleep a lot, and we won't rest as long as we haven't achieved something incredible.

How do you define yourselves, personally?

We're proud to be French, and especially Sarcellois, everywhere we go. We feel international at home in France, and when we're abroad we're proud to be French.

What motivates you?

We believe in 'us'. My brother is my best rival, and we want to be the best in the world.





What's your motto?

Live life like a dance. Each step is important. We also have a tattoo that says, "Trust Nobody", which to us means that you need to trust in yourself, your instinct, and most of all believe in yourself. We know that we are the masters of our own destiny.

Who's your competition?

We compete between ourselves, and that's why we're so strong. We want to be the best. There is no other competition.

What did you know about the Maison Hennessy before joining its family?

We had a very urban image of Hennessy, because it's been a part of our orbit ever since we started dancing: our friends order it in nightclubs, it's part of street culture, and hip-hop especially. So it was a natural collaboration even if we don't drink often, personally. To be masters of our art, of movement, we need to have complete control of our bodies. But in 2017 when we won the World of Dance finals, we celebrated with a glass of Hennessy. We also see Hennessy everywhere we travel we discovered the House's collaboration with Ridley Scott in the LA airport. It was fantastic: the entire store was an experience.

What were your first impressions when you visited Cognac?

It was like walking into a chapter of French history! The reason we wanted to collaborate with Hennessy is because there's an incredible story behind it, something real, built on genuine savoir-faire. But we didn't realize how major it was until we got there. The Château de Bagnolet is immense. We received an incredible welcome, we felt right at home there, and we learned so

much. You get the sense that people are happy, that they're passionate about their work: the energy is so warm and generous — it's like a cocoon that tells the story of the Maison Hennessy. Every step of the creative process is totally mastered. And the winter garden is almost futuristic.

What surprised you most?

Laurent: I didn't expect to be so drawn to the process. We went into the fields, got our feet muddy, spoke about the earth, talked about the grapes, harvesting, watched a drone fly over a field to analyze the vines.; we had a blast.

Larry: That's when I realized how lucky I am. I hadn't realized before I was surprised to realize that the whole town, all of Cognac, is about cognac-making. It's a part of French history. Seeing the arm and the broad axe made us think about our own story — it's about adventure, the conquering spirit. The work, the House's sense of duty, the fact that everyone did what they did for future generations, it's incredible.

Each in your own way, you and Hennessy's Master Blender, Renaud Fillieux de Gironde, are artists. What was it like when you met?

Larry: We instantly understood each other. Renaud's used to welcoming lots of important people to Cognac, and right away he shared his love of the Maison with us. The Maison just feels like family in the sense that being together makes us feel (even) stronger.

Laurent: Renaud spoke to us about different years, the challenges due to weather, hail, etc., when they have to work even harder to ensure everything comes together exactly right. We were blown away by the eaux-de-vie. He explained to us why he respects the earth so much. The earth is connected to the sky.



At what point did your dance interpretation come together?

Laurent: I think our second visit to Cognac was when we really understood. Learning the House's history changed everything for us; we weren't the same after that, it was mind-blowing. We knew that Hennessy is luxurious, but when we set foot there and understood the story behind it, and all the steps that go into making Hennessy cognac, we said to ourselves that everyone should know more about it. Hennessy is intertwined with the history of France. It's a love story about preserving land for future generations. Believe it or not, it resonates with Les Twins' story, 200 years later. Like Hennessy, we had to stick together, change people's minds, and just forge ahead. Also: our lives, personal and professional, are likewise one and the same.

What are the parallels between cognac-making and movement/dance?

Laurent: First of all, you need patience to create, precision of gesture, timing and a lot of energy. Music and dance are vectors of emotion, and there's always inspiration that comes from the people you meet. At Maison Hennessy, they talk about the vines; Les Twins talk about dance and music, but anyone who follows us knows that we set out to forge a new path, like Richard Hennessy did in his time.

Larry: Dance is a mix of different, unique movements, and the art of blending depends on the emotions in different notes and unique eaux-de-vie. We're both always striving to create emotion. We both seek harmony, in movement and in nature. Every step is important. Working with Maison Hennessy is like going onstage with new energy. And Maison Hennessy's not afraid to mix things up. We're expressing that knowledge through movement – and our experience with Hennessy has changed how we dance; we incorporate everything we learn.

Your collaboration with Hennessy Very Special marks the first time that the six phases of cognac-making, from the vine to the carafe, became part of the final artwork. How did you put it all into movement?

Laurent: The dance speaks for itself. It's all freestyle, improvisation. We didn't even discuss who does what; it's beyond words. We wanted to express the House's entire creative process through movement. Larry was wood and fire; I was the earth and the grapevine as it grows, through the seasons. When we dance, we bring together elements people may not know about, and we become those things, deeply, you can see it and it goes very quickly. So we created three movements that allowed us to really blend everything together, culminating in the two stances depicted on the carafe and packaging.

Larry: It's like you can't have one without the other, on the bottles, in our video or in a live performance.



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When people see your composition, what will make them think “Hennessy”?

They won’t be able to help themselves! Hennessy, with a lot of love, has opened its doors to a wider public than they ever have before with this collaboration. Now, it’s up to us to convey the love and caring Hennessy puts into what they do — it’s like a poem, or opening a new door to a family’s story.

For that reason, it’s hard to explain “Move Out Loud” in words: you have to discover it in the moment. It’s about joining in a movement and experiencing something entirely new. That said, our dance for Hennessy feels doable, it’s easy to mirror whether or not people actually dance.

This collaboration lives in the moment, yet its look is futuristic.

We want to share our energy, surprise people and do things they’ll remember forever. When Hennessy arranged for us to perform using motion capture technology, it opened up a whole new dimension — the colors and shapes on the label look like we just leaped from the stage right onto the bottles.

Please tell us more about the bottle design for Hennessy Very Special x Les Twins.

What’s amazing to us is Hennessy’s willingness to make this collaboration so personal, representing France through two people of color whose story is two centuries removed from Hennessy’s and yet so similar. The Hennessy Very Special x Les Twins is a single special edition, but with two different bottles featuring our likenesses on the packaging. The House even redesigned their historic crest, the arm and the broadax, just for us: here it appears in double as the House were saying Les Twins’ story touches us, let’s do this. The Hennessy name also appears in Les Twins’ signature graphics, which is something the House has never done before. It’s a touching gesture of mutual respect and loyalty — and prestige too, since none of those heritage elements has been altered before.

The Hennessy Very Special x Les Twins collaboration marks several firsts, in fact: it’s a dual edition that features performing artists, and incorporates fashion and music. Please tell us more about those aspects?

We’re always throwing out ideas, and what we learned with Hennessy is that they listened to every single one, and they went and made so many of them happen. We were blown away. At Hennessy, there’s nothing they can’t do.



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You suggested doing a Hennessy Very Special fashion capsule. How did that come about?

It's a real source of pride for us to be the bridge between Hennessy and fashion. We have experience in the fashion industry, so doing a Les Twins capsule collection was a perfect fit, and Hennessy really let us put it together the way we wanted, which is the way young people want to wear clothes. "Hennessy in Motion" is elevated streetwear with pieces that are more "Laurent" or "Larry," but always with discreet twists. He has real style, lots of energy, a flair with color and materials, he expresses himself through clothes the way we do through dance—and like us he's proud to be French. We wanted to create

well-cut clothes that people will feel good in and want to wear every day, that they can mix with favorite pieces they already own.

You also composed original music for this collaboration, without telling Hennessy first.

We've been doing music for about 10 years: one day a friend said, "maybe it's time for you to put words to your moves." We're inspired by all kinds of music; as dancers we listen to it deeply. For Hennessy, we came up with lyrics that are clear, easy to remember, and could easily be sung by a crowd. There's an anthemic quality to it, a "stand up" message.



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