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# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

THE JOAN WEILL CENTER FOR DANCE 405 WEST 55TH STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10019-4402 PH 212.405.9000 FX 212.405.9001 WWW.ALVINAILEY.ORG

Alvin Ailey, Founder Robert Battle, Artistic Director Masazumi Chaya, Associate Artistic Director  
Judith Jamison, Artistic Director Emerita Sharon Gersten Luckman, Executive Director

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Press Contacts:

Christopher Zunner

czunner@alvinailey.org /212-405-9028

Emily Hawkins

ehawkins@alvinailey.org /212-405-9083

## **AILEY II ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND DANCE LEGEND SYLVIA WATERS TO RETIRE IN 2012 — TROY POWELL IS APPOINTED AS AILEY II ARTISTIC DIRECTOR DESIGNATE**

**NEW YORK, NY (August 25, 2011)** – The Ailey organization today announced that one of the dance world’s most deeply admired figures, Sylvia Waters, will retire on June 30, 2012, from her position as Artistic Director of Ailey II, the company of young dancers she has led for nearly four decades.

Chosen by Alvin Ailey to guide and develop Ailey II following seven years as a lead dancer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Ms. Waters has trained generations of outstanding professional dancers, opened the door for many of today’s most vital choreographers (including Robert Battle, now the Artistic Director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater) and has brought Ailey II, which was founded in 1974, to prominence as one of the world’s most popular and acclaimed touring companies.

To lead the company forward, Ms. Waters has named Troy Powell, the veteran Ailey dancer, teacher, choreographer and Ailey II Associate Artistic Director since 2003, to be her successor. In a decision enthusiastically endorsed by the Foundation’s Board, Mr. Powell will immediately become Artistic Director Designate of Ailey II and will assume his new role as Artistic Director on July 1, 2012.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater will pay tribute to Ms. Waters with a special performance on the evening of Sunday, December 11, as part of its five-week season at New York City Center. Ms. Waters will be honored with performances of *Memoria* by Alvin Ailey (the first work in which Mr. Ailey combined Ailey II with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater), *Minus 16* by Ohad Naharin, *Takademe* by Robert Battle and *Revelations* by Alvin Ailey. Following her retirement from Ailey II, Ms. Waters will remain active in the Ailey organization, including leading The Ailey Legacy Residency, a new lecture, technique and repertory program for college-level students that looks definitively into the history and creative heritage of Alvin Ailey.

“There is simply no way to calculate the impact that Sylvia Waters has had on the Ailey organization—or for that matter on the dance world as a whole,” stated Sharon Gersten Luckman, Executive Director of Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation. “For more than forty years, she has been an immense, benevolent influence on us all. She has mentored generations of young dancers and choreographers who have gone on to important careers—including the dynamic Troy Powell, who has worked so closely with Sylvia and now will take charge as her successor, ensuring a bright and strong future for Ailey II.”

Robert Battle, Artistic Director of Alvin Ailey Dance Theater, stated, “Like so many others, I began my connection with the Ailey organization through Sylvia Waters, when she invited me to choreograph for Ailey II. Like Judith Jamison, Sylvia is our teacher, our mentor, our touchstone of personal integrity—and one of our most important direct links to Alvin Ailey himself. I offer Sylvia my deepest gratitude. I congratulate Troy Powell on a new role that I know means the world to him, and that he richly deserves.”

Sylvia Waters stated, “Mr. Ailey gave me the greatest gift imaginable when he created a second company and asked me to take charge of it. I have spent the past 37 years living with the energies and enthusiasms, the hopes and hurts, of some of the world’s best young dancers and choreographers – memories I will always cherish. I’m excited to continue coaching, teaching master classes and conducting The Ailey Legacy Residency, and I can’t wait to see all the new ways that Ailey II will flourish with Troy Powell’s inspired leadership.”

Troy Powell commented, “I’m so grateful that Mr. Ailey invited me to study at The Ailey School, after I participated in one of Ailey’s outreach activities at my elementary school when I was nine. I’ve had the incomparable experience of being coached by and learning *Revelations* directly from Mr. Ailey, starting when I was 14, and of performing in Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater under Judith Jamison’s direction. The most important part of my training, though, not just as a dancer but as a person, came during my time as a young professional under Sylvia Waters in Ailey II. That’s where I got my real education: watching how Sylvia worked, following what she did, listening to everything she said. It’s through Sylvia’s example most of all that I’ve wanted to embrace and continue Alvin Ailey’s legacy—and I feel blessed to have this opportunity.”

Joan H. Weill, Chairman of the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, stated, “Ailey II is in many ways the vital connection running through everything we do, linking The Ailey School to Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and the Ailey organization to emerging choreographers, community programs and cities of all sizes around the country and the world. On behalf of the Board, I congratulate Sylvia and Troy on this thoughtful and well-managed transition, accomplished in the true Ailey spirit.”

Ailey II’s 2011-2012 tour will consist of performances in more than 25 cities across the United States and abroad, including a New York season from April 18 – 29, 2012 at The Ailey Citigroup Theater. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater’s New York City Center performances, led by Robert Battle in his inaugural season as Artistic Director, extend from November 30, 2011 – January 1, 2012, during which Sylvia Waters will be honored on December 11. Tickets starting at \$25 go on sale September 6. For further information, visit [www.alvinailey.org](http://www.alvinailey.org).

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**Press:** For photos, video and additional materials, visit [pressroom.alvinailey.org](http://pressroom.alvinailey.org)

### **About Sylvia Waters**

Since the founding of Ailey II more than 35 years ago, Artistic Director Sylvia Waters has been responsible for the growth and expansion of one of the country's most vibrant young dance companies.

Ms. Waters's commitment to dance began when the art form was introduced in her junior high school curriculum. She continued her studies at the New Dance Group on scholarship, whose illustrious faculty included Alvin Ailey, Sophie Maslow, Donald McKayle, Muriel Manning, Jane Dudley, Geoffrey Holder and Carmen de Lavallade. While earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Dance at The Juilliard School, she studied with distinguished faculty members Antony Tudor, Martha Graham, Alfredo Corvino, Ethel Winter, Helen McGhee, Bertram Ross and Mary Hinkson. Ms. Waters received a scholarship to the Martha Graham Center of Contemporary Dance and also performed with Donald McKayle's dance company.

Following her graduation from Juilliard, Ms. Waters toured in the European company of *Black Nativity*. She subsequently moved to Paris, where she appeared regularly on television and worked with Michel Descombey, then director of the Paris Opera Ballet, as well as Milko Sparembleck. Ms. Waters also performed in Donald McKayle's European production of *Black New World*, worked with Maurice Béjart's company Ballet of the 20th Century, then performed in Brussels and at the Summer Olympics in Mexico City.

Ms. Waters returned to the United States in 1968 and joined Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. She toured throughout the United States, South America, Europe, North Africa and the Soviet Union as a principal dancer with the company until becoming the Artistic Director of Ailey II.

Ms. Waters has also established a distinguished reputation conducting master classes throughout the U.S. and Europe, most recently serving as a visiting lecturer at Harvard University in 2010. In 1997, she received an honorary doctorate from the State University of New York at Oswego. She has served as a panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts and is also active in a variety of other national and local arts organizations. In the fall of 2003, Dance Theater Workshop presented Ms. Waters with a New York Dance and Performance ("Bessie") Award for Sustained Achievement in recognition of her outstanding commitment to young and emerging artists. More recently, in 2008, Ms. Waters received the Legacy Award as part of the 20th Annual IABD Festival and Syracuse University's Women of Distinction Award, and the prestigious Dance Magazine Award.

### **About Troy Powell**

Troy Powell has served as Associate Artistic Director of Ailey II since 2003. A native of Harlem, he participated in Ailey educational programs in his elementary school and began his formal dance training at age nine, when Alvin Ailey personally selected him to receive a scholarship to The Ailey School.

In 1988, after Mr. Powell graduated from The High School of Performing Arts, Sylvia Waters invited him to become a member of Ailey II. He performed with the company for three years. He joined Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1991 and toured with it throughout the United States, South America, Europe and South Africa for ten years before becoming a master teacher at The Ailey School and resident choreographer of Ailey II.

Mr. Powell has choreographed 15 ballets for The Ailey School as a resident choreographer; seven ballets for Ailey II, including *The External Knot* and *The Tyner Project* (with music by McCoy Tyner, for the Verizon Arts festival at Alice Tully Hall); and *Ascension* for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. He has also choreographed for Dallas Black Dance Theater, Alaska Dance Theater and *Sesame Street*. He has performed as a guest artist with companies such as Batsheva, Dallas Black Dance Theater and Complexions. He was featured

in an American Express commercial as a member of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and has appeared on television in George C. Wolfe's *The Colored Museum*, the PBS *Great Performances: Dance In America* special *A Hymn for Alvin Ailey*, choreographed by Judith Jamison, and, most recently, *America's Next Top Model*.

In addition to his teaching at the Ailey organization, Mr. Powell teaches master classes and workshops throughout the country.

## **About Ailey II**

Ailey II is an exceptional company that merges the spirit and energy of the country's best young dance talent with the passion and creative vision of today's most outstanding emerging choreographers. Started in 1974 as the Alvin Ailey Repertory Ensemble, Ailey II embodies Mr. Ailey's pioneering mission to establish an extended cultural community that provides dance performances, training and community programs for all people. Today, it has become one of the most popular dance companies in the United States.

Under the artistic direction of Sylvia Waters, Ailey II dancers are chosen from the most promising scholarship students of The Ailey School and offers unique opportunities for these young artists to refine their technique while gaining invaluable performing and teaching experience during their tenure with the Company. Many Ailey II members have gone on to pursue successful careers as dancers, teachers and choreographers with other dance companies, on Broadway and in schools.

In recent years, Ailey II's distinctive repertory has included works by dance masters Alvin Ailey, Talley Beatty, Donald Byrd, Ulysses Dove, George W. Faison, Lar Lubovitch, Ailey's Artistic Director Judith Jamison and Artistic Director Designate Robert Battle. Ailey II has also performed innovative works by emerging choreographers, including Sidra Bell, Thang Dao, Carlos dos Santos and Christopher L. Huggins, and has also commissioned numerous works over the years by other choreographers at the start of their careers, including Shen Wei, Scott Rink, and Camille A. Brown. The Company's 2011-2012 tour will consist of performances in over 25 cities across the United States and abroad. The Company has received numerous honors, awards and proclamations in recognition of its residencies at major colleges and universities as well as its visits to elementary, middle, and high schools across the US.

Ailey II is presented by Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, a non-profit organization which also supports the activities of the renowned Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, The Ailey School, Ailey Arts In Education & Community Programs and the Ailey Extension.

## **All About Ailey**

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, recognized by U.S. Congressional resolution as a vital American "Cultural Ambassador to the World," grew from a now-fabled March 1958 performance in New York that changed forever the perception of American dance. Founded by Alvin Ailey, and guided by Judith Jamison beginning in 1989, the Company is now led by Robert Battle, whom Judith Jamison chose to succeed her on July 1, 2011. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has performed for an estimated 23 million people in 71 countries on 6 continents, promoting the uniqueness of the African-American cultural experience and the preservation and enrichment of the American modern dance tradition. The Ailey organization also includes Ailey II (1974), a second performing company of emerging young dancers and innovative choreographers; The Ailey School (1969), one of the most extensive dance training programs in the world; Ailey Arts in Education & Community Programs, which brings dance into the classrooms, communities and lives of people of all ages; and The Ailey Extension (2005), a program offering dance and fitness classes to the general public, which began with the opening of Ailey's permanent home—the largest building dedicated to dance in New York City, the dance capital of the world—named The Joan Weill Center for Dance, at 55th Street at 9th Avenue in New York City. For more information, visit [www.AlvinAiley.org](http://www.AlvinAiley.org).