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# Ailey II's bittersweet season

## Artistic Director Sylvia Waters retires after 38 years

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*Special to the AmNews*

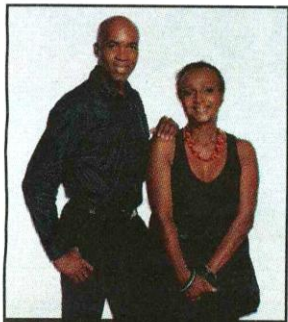
"Ailey II created a standard and I want to maintain that standard...the legacy is in me," said Troy Powell, who will officially be named artistic director of Ailey II July 1 when Sylvia Waters, the artistic director for nearly four decades, who was named to the post by Alvin Ailey, retires.

For this bittersweet season (April 18-29) at their home theater, the Ailey Citigroup Theater, Waters has carefully crafted two very mixed programs of new and challenging material: "Modern Moves" and "Contemporary Choices."

The "Modern Moves" program features Thang Dao's "Echos" (2010), which "depicts the echoes of memories of his family escaping Vietnam"; and Mina Yoo's "Boulevard" (2006), described as "an athletic piece that references a neighborhood 'on the boulevard,' where young people of various cultures and backgrounds interact. [It] blends contemporary dance with the percussive sounds of Michel Macias, Hugues Le Bars, René

Aubry and Greetje Bijma."

Set to music by Mio Morales and rounding out the program is Powell's seventh world premiere, the full ensemble work "Reference Point," which he describes as a show of different "moods of



Ailey II's Artistic Director Sylvia Waters and Artistic Director Designate Troy Powell (Eduardo Patino photos)

[his Ailey] journey," emphasizing the dancer's "individuality, focus and integrity."

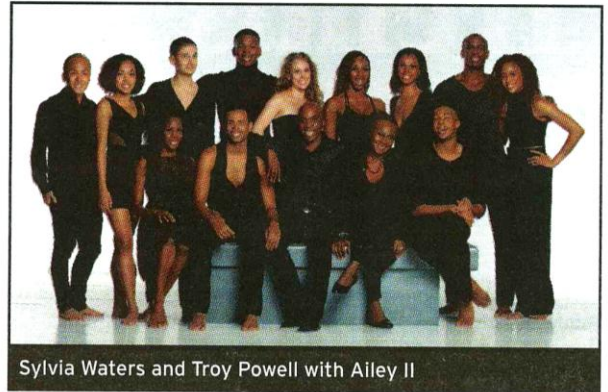
The second program, "Contemporary Choices," will feature the premiere of Stephanie Batten Bland's "The Legacy of Inheritance," which "fuses European and American styles into post-modern dance [by] moving through

and around an enormous white fabric, which takes on the form of several elements [as] the dancers are propelled forward by the music of Zoe Keating and Stars of the Lid."

Also on this program are Kyle Abraham's "The Corner" (2011), a full ensemble work "combining contemporary hip-hop vernacular with postmodern movement"; and Donald Byrd's "Shards" (1988), originally staged by Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (AAADT) and set to music by Mio Morales. To this, Waters opined, "This season's beautiful bouquet of dynamic dancers and stunning premieres will not disappoint—they are making my final season a memorable one!"

It has been more than 20 years since Powell began his relationship with Waters, first at the Ailey School, Ailey II and AAADT, then as associate artistic director of Ailey II, which he has been since 2003. He remembered, "Those were the most amazing years, [because] I was working with someone who was more than a mentor."

Truthfully, though, he admitted that, in a way, he saw this next step coming. "As the years passed, there has been



Sylvia Waters and Troy Powell with Ailey II

so much support in that direction," he said.

Proud to have named Powell as her successor, Waters confirmed, "Troy has come a long way—he has evolved into a mature teacher and mover, and we have built up a trust in ways that I haven't trusted anyone to carry on and be there when I'm not."

Powell is on a long list of dance artists nurtured in a most special way by Waters, who spares nothing when it comes to giving young choreographers a chance to have their work presented or giving dance artists a platform for their art. The current artistic director of AAADT, Robert Battle, is a prime example—Waters invited him to choreograph for Ailey II in 1999, and the rest is history.

There is mutual admiration between Waters and Powell, that's very clear. "I admire him and will always be there for him," said Waters.

Powell said, "She made it really easy for me...she is why I'm here."

Of course, there is sadness in the midst of all this change. "I'm sad—I expected to be sad," said Waters, "but I will retire, not expire." She will remain an integral part of the Ailey organization in myriad ways, but more importantly, she leaves Ailey II in good hands. Again endorsing Powell, she insisted, "Troy loves the company as much as I do."

For more information on Ailey II's season of premieres and audience favorites, call (212) 405-9082 or visit [www.alvinailey.org](http://www.alvinailey.org)