

# HUFFPOST ARTS

## Sharon Gersten Luckman To Step Down From Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation: Famed Executive Director To Resign In 2013

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According to a press release from the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, executive director Sharon Gersten Luckman will step down in 2013 to pursue other plans.

Luckman has held her position at Ailey for 16 years and is largely credited with breathing new life into a program which was on the verge of bankruptcy when she took over.

The highly respected director oversaw a massive overhaul of the organization and its coffers, with net assets growing from \$300,000 when she took her position to \$134 million (*The Wall*

*Street Journal* adds that she grew the foundation's endowment from zero to \$50 million). She helped form many partnerships, including the founding of a BFA in dance at Fordham University which allowed dancers to study at both Ailey and the university.

Prior to her stint as executive director, she was appointed the Director of Development in 1992. In this capacity she oversaw all fundraising programs and, in the span of a single season, raised the amount of donations by over 50 percent.

Unsurprisingly, credit is also given largely to Luckman for the explosive increase in Alvin Ailey's name recognition as a globally respected arts and dance institution. Under her tenure, the foundation aggressively marketed everything from CDs and DVDs to a Mattel Alvin Ailey Barbie.

A new executive director has yet to be chosen, but the foundation has retained the services of headhunters Phillips Oppenheim to find a new leader.

The press release which announced her eventual departure included the following statement from Luckman:

"I consider myself extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to work side by side with the superb staff and brilliant dancers of the Ailey organization, with two magnificent Artistic Directors, Judith Jamison and Robert Battle, with our wonderful Associate Artistic Director Masazumi Chaya, and with a deeply dedicated Board of Trustees under the invaluable leadership of Joan Weill. At Ailey, we often speak of ourselves as a family. I am very proud of what my family has accomplished over these past decades -- and although I will now be moving on to other endeavors, I know I will always feel I'm a part of Ailey."

Prior to her work with Ailey, Luckman was a dance teacher and the director of the 92nd Street YM/WHA Dance Center, the Twyla Tharp Dance Foundation and Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts.

Alvin Ailey has been seen by over 23,000,000 people around the world. Robert Battle is currently the foundation's artistic director, having succeeded Judith Jamison.