



# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

Press Contact: Christopher Zunner  
[czunner@alvinailey.org](mailto:czunner@alvinailey.org)  
212-405-9028

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 JUDITH JAMISON, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR Masazumi Chaya, Associate Artistic Director Sharon Gersten Luckman, Executive Director

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## JUDITH JAMISON AND ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER APPOINT ROBERT BATTLE AS NEW ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

**(NEW YORK) April 29, 2010** - Judith Jamison today announced that her mantle as Artistic Director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater will pass to Robert Battle, a fast-rising choreographer who has created ballets for the Ailey company and Ailey II since 1999 and has served as an artist-in-residence with The Ailey School. Mr. Battle, 37, will be the third person to head the company since its founding by Alvin Ailey in 1958. He will serve side-by-side with Ms. Jamison as Artistic Director Designate from now until July 1, 2011, when she takes Emerita status and he assumes his full responsibilities.

Judith Jamison stated, "We are enormously fortunate in being able to secure the leadership of Robert Battle. Combining an intimate knowledge of the Ailey company with an independent perspective, he is without question the creative force of the future."



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Artistic Director Judith Jamison & Robert Battle, Artistic Director Designate. Photo by Paul Kolnik (April 28, 2010 at The Ailey Studios)

Joan H. Weill, Chairman of the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, commented, "Robert's decade-long relationship with Ailey has given me confidence that he is a great choice to lead the company at this moment. It is exciting to know that his fresh point of view and powerful new ideas will now become part of the ever-enduring, ever-evolving legacy of Alvin Ailey, carrying our spirit forward in the years ahead."

Bruce Gordon, chairman of the Succession Planning Committee for the Board of Trustees, commented, "We feel certain that our audiences throughout the United States and around the world will embrace the evolution of the Ailey company under Robert Battle's direction. They will know their profound emotional bond with this company is being not just honored but renewed."

According to Executive Director Sharon Gersten Luckman, "Alvin Ailey and Judith Jamison built a world-renowned institution around a singular artistic vision. Under Robert Battle's artistic leadership, we can be sure that the vision will remain strong and true. I look forward to working with him to keep this institution flourishing for years to come.

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Ailey Board Chair Joan H. Weill, Artistic Director Designate Robert Battle & Artistic Director Judith Jamison. Photo by Paul Kolnik (April 28, 2010 at The Ailey Studios)

Accepting his appointment as Artistic Director Designate, Robert Battle stated, “I don’t know whether to call this the proudest moment of my life or the most humbling. With the help of Judith Jamison and the great, great dancers in this company, I hope to be worthy of this tremendous responsibility that I’ve been given, and to honor it in the only way Alvin Ailey would have accepted: by keeping it new, alive and moving forward.”

“In seeking a new artistic leader for the company, it was important to find someone who has his own vision, his own experience,” Judith Jamison explained. “Robert has his own company and is a maverick in his choreography. He’s edgy and forward-thinking, very talented and savvy—a lovely, intelligent person who in many ways reminds me of Alvin. He also has a worldview and is capable of taking this company in new directions, while at the same time understanding our traditions. Choosing Robert Battle is the giant leap I want to take to ensure that this company stays vibrant in the future.”



Artistic Director Judith Jamison & Robert Battle, Artistic Director Designate with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Photo by Paul Kolnik  
(April 28, 2010 at The Ailey Studios)

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### **About Robert Battle**

Honored by the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in 2005 as one of the “Masters of African-American Choreography,” Robert Battle was born in Miami, Florida, in 1972 and was educated at the New World School of the Arts and The Juilliard School. Upon his graduation from Juilliard in 1994, he joined the David Parsons company as a dancer, and in 1998 he began setting his own work on the company, which now has performed his choreography nationally and internationally. Upon leaving Parsons in 2001, Robert Battle founded his own group, Battleworks Dance Company, which made its premiere in 2002 at the World Dance Alliance’s Global Assembly in Düsseldorf, Germany, where it was the U.S. representative to the festival. Battleworks has subsequently performed extensively at venues including the Joyce Theater, Dance Theater Workshop, American Dance Festival and Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival.

Robert Battle began his association with Ailey in 1999, when he was commissioned to create *Mood Indigo* for the popular young Ailey II company under the leadership of its long-time Artistic Director Sylvia Waters. He first worked with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 2003 when he created *Juba* for the company and choreographed side-by-side with Judith Jamison and Rennie Harris for *Love Stories*, which had its world premiere in 2004. The most recent work by Mr. Battle to enter the company’s repertoire is *In/Side*, performed during the December 2009 New York season to popular and critical acclaim. Mr. Battle has also conducted workshops for The Ailey School as an artist-in-residence in 2006 and 2008.

Other companies that have commissioned new works from Mr. Battle or restaged his ballets include Hubbard Street Repertory Ensemble, River North Dance Company, Koresh Dance Company, Introdans, PARADIGM, Jeanne Ruddy Dance, and Ballet Memphis, among others.

In addition to his activities as a company leader and choreographer, Robert Battle regularly conducts residencies at universities throughout the United States and teaches master classes in New York and abroad. Among the honors he has received is the prestigious Statue award of the Princess Grace Foundation-USA, which he accepted in 2007.

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### **About Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater**

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (AAADT), 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. Today, led by Judith Jamison, AAADT has performed for an estimated 23 million people in 48 states and in 71 countries on 6 continents, including two historic residencies in South Africa, promoting the uniqueness of the African-American cultural experience and the preservation and enrichment of the American modern dance tradition. Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, Inc. is the umbrella organization that includes Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater; 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, a program offering dance and fitness classes to the general public, which began with the opening of Ailey’s permanent home—the nation’s largest building dedicated to dance—named The Joan Weill Center for Dance, at 55<sup>th</sup> Street at 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue in New York City. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is currently celebrating Judith Jamison’s 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as Artistic Director with a 20-city U.S. Tour, culminating at BAM from June 10-20. For more information, visit [www.alvinailey.org](http://www.alvinailey.org).