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Arts Beat

The Culture at Large



First Lady Michelle Obama, Iman and John Legend to Kick Off Ailey Season

By Daniel J. Wakin

The first lady, Michelle Obama, and the model Iman will be honorary chairwomen of the opening night gala performance of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater at City Center on Nov. 30, the company said. The Ailey company also said that John Legend, the musician who has won nine Grammy Awards, will perform “If It’s Magic,” with choreography by the company’s former artistic director, Judith Jamison. This season will be the first under her successor, Robert Battle.

The Ailey company cultivates a glamorous image and prides itself on attracting what it calls “A-list Ailey attendees” to its performances, providing a list with its gala announcement of public figures who have attended. They start with Mrs. Obama and her husband, the president, and include Derek Jeter, Beyoncé, Oprah Winfrey, Katie Holmes, Katie Couric and Morgan Freeman. Mrs. Obama had yet to confirm her attendance, but Iman has, Ailey said. Proceeds from the gala go to support Ailey’s educational programs, including scholarships and outreach programs.



John Legend with members of the company.
Photo: Colin Williams