

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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## Ailey Company Director Ends 16-Year Tenure

By PIA CATTON

The executive director of the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation will step down in 2013, ending a 16-year run in which she oversaw significant growth, the organization said Wednesday.

Since taking the reins in 1995, Sharon Gersten Luckman racked up a list of accomplishments that have made the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater one of the city's most solid, well-managed modern-dance companies.

Under her leadership, the endowment grew from zero to more than \$50 million. In 2005, its permanent home, the Joan Weill Center for Dance, opened on Manhattan's West Side as a result of a capital campaign that raised \$75 million. The annual budget grew from \$9 million to \$30 million.

"We are in a stable position. We're not rich, but we're stable," Ms. Luckman said in an interview.

Among the reasons for that success was the development of the company's highly engaged board of trustees.

"It was very gradual, but it was also deliberate," she said. "We made a concerted and disciplined effort to look for people who really cared about us. There are a lot of great fans of Ailey, but we tried to think it through

and build a diverse board."

Ms. Luckman's departure is part of long-range plan that she developed before overseeing the company's search and transition to its new artistic director, Robert Battle. That process took about three years.

But even when Mr. Battle took over in July, Ms. Luckman wasn't finished. "I knew I wanted that person to have a year before I left," she said.

Her big-picture thinking comprises a management style that Mr. Battle said was immediately apparent as he took on his new role.

"There is nothing too small or too large that doesn't need some sort of strategy," he said. "Things you might think are simple—'Oh you just do it that way!'—she's always thinking, 'How do we want it to happen?'"

Ms. Luckman described her approach: "What's our goal, and how are we going to achieve it?" At every single staff meeting, my big mantra is: 'A goal without a deadline is just a wish.'"

The Ailey Company board of trustees will begin the search for a new executive director, who should take over by early 2013. Though Ms. Luckman is unsure of her next step, she said, "I am very interested in not-for-profits having professional management. I hope that I have more to give."