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## ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT

# New Exec Director For Ailey Company

By PIA CATTON

The Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation will announce on Wednesday its selection of a new executive director from within its own ranks: Bennett Rink, currently the senior director of development and external affairs, will take the modern-dance company's top administrative job in January 2013. Mr. Rink will replace Sharon Gersten Luckman, who has served in the post since 1995, and whose planned departure was announced in January.

The change on the company's business side comes after a significant change on its artistic side: In July 2011, Robert Battle assumed his role as artistic director, replacing Judith Jamison, who'd held the post since 1989.

The Ailey leadership is keen on well-organized transitions, and often promotes from within. Ms. Luckman's exit was scheduled so as to give her successor a year with her before she left. After she announced her departure, the board began a nine-month search that included extensive interviews with about eight top candidates, according to board chairman Joan Weill.

Mr. Rink was hired in 1994 as manager of special events, then

took over the development department in 1998. In 2007 his job expanded to include external affairs. Ms. Weill, who has chaired the board since 2000, said she was impressed by Mr. Rink's ability to take on more roles within the organization and calmly handle the details. "I worked with Bennett for many years under stressful situations, like the seating for our galas," Ms. Weill said. "He knows the organization inside and out."

Mr. Rink, reached shortly after receiving the news, said it was premature to discuss his goals for Ailey. "My head is spinning. I started out at Ailey doing whatever needed to be done, even if it was stuffing gift bags in the kitchen of the Pierre Hotel," he said. "My journey at Ailey has really led to this moment."

Mr. Rink inherits a financially solid company that is engaged on stages around the world as a voice for diversity and the African-American experience through dance. Under Ms. Luckman's watch, the Ailey organization raised its endowment from zero to \$55 million; in 2005 it opened a permanent facility in Midtown West for its company and other programs following a \$75 million capital campaign.

"This is an organization that is poised to expand in a lot of ways," said Ms. Luckman, citing the Ailey School and housing for students as possible areas.

In helping to expand fundraising opportunities, Mr. Rink has overseen the expansion of gala evenings, including events at the Apollo Theater and the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. He said his philosophy for growth is "to help people understand the importance and impact of everything that Ailey does, from the performances onstage to the scholarships to the camps for inner-city youth."



Paul Kolnik

Bennett Rink