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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Ailey Company Shuffles Leadership

By PIA CATTON

Sylvia Waters, the former dancer who has led the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's second company, Ailey II, for nearly 40 years, will step down as artistic director in June 2012, the company will announce Thursday.

Choreographer Alvin Ailey founded the second company in 1974—after he founded AAADT in 1958—and chose Ms. Waters to lead it. Since that time, Ailey II has been an entry point for

young dancers hoping to ascend to the main company. It has also welcomed the work of up-and-coming choreographers, among them Robert Battle, who in July became AAADT's artistic director.

As of July 1, 2012, dancer and choreographer Troy Powell will become the artistic director of Ailey II. Mr. Powell's training began at age 9, under the watchful eye of Alvin Ailey, who selected him to receive a scholarship to the Ailey school. "He played a father figure role in my life," Mr. Powell said. "As a teenager, I got

to work with him in choreographic workshops. I got to see him move and just be in the room with someone who was a genius."

Mr. Powell has since participated at almost every level of this company. In 1988 he became a member of Ailey II after growing up in Harlem and graduating from the High School for the Performing Arts. He joined the main company in 1991. He has been the associate artistic director of Ailey II since 2003.

The depth of his experience

has allowed early lessons to settle in: "Mr. Ailey used to say, 'You're a human being before you're a dancer.' When you're 14, you don't understand what that means. I've been part of this organization for over 33 years. It's a part of me."

Looking forward, his intention for the company is balance. "What Silvia has rooted in me is keeping Mr. Ailey's legacy alive," Mr. Powell said, adding that at the same time, he wants "to keep it you and fresh as well with this generation."