

WASHINGTON LIFE MAGAZINE

Alvin Ailey 25th Annual Gala

April 2025



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COVER: The Washington Ballet's ALICE (in Wonderland) with Katerina Derechyna and Maki Onuki, choreographed by Edward Liang (photo by Jonathan Thorpe). **ABOVE:** Models at the Carolina Herrera event (photos by Leigh Vogel / Getty Images for Nordstrom). Alvin Ailey's 25th Anniversary Gala (photos by Tony Powell). Arena Stages' The Age of Innocence (photo by Daniel Rader). Decorations for the Women Making History Event. Photos by Cindy Ord and Leigh Vogel/Getty Images for National Women's History Museum (NWHP). Spanish Ambassador Angeles Moreno Bae at her residence in front of a piece by one of her favorite artists, Gustavo Torner (photos by Nelson Richardson/Vsoul Photos).

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Washington Life magazine publishes ten times a year. Issues are distributed in February, March, April, May, June, July/August, September, November, and December and are hand delivered on a rotating basis to over 150,000 homes throughout D.C., Northern Virginia, and Maryland. Additional copies are available at various upscale retailers, hotels, select restaurants, and Whole Foods stores in the area. For a complete listing, please consult our website at www.washingtonlife.com. You can also subscribe the online at www.washingtonlife.com or send a check for \$79.95 (one year) to Washington Life Magazine, 2301 Tracy Place NW, Washington, DC 20008. Email us at info@washingtonlife.com with press releases, tips, and editorial comments. Copyright ©2021 by Washington Life. All rights reserved. Reproduction or use of editorial content or photos in any manner without permission is strictly prohibited. Printed in the United States. We will not be responsible for evolved manuscripts or photographs.

DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE

In a city where fantasy and power often intertwine, it's no surprise that Washington sometimes feels like its own version of "Wonderland." Reality bends, facts twist and those in charge seem to sip from curious little bottles marked "Drink Me" before making sweeping decisions that reshape the nation. As we navigate this surreal political and economic terrain—still adjusting to the shockwaves of Donald Trump's return to office—it seems particularly fitting that our April cover features an image from "ALICE (in wonderland)," a performance choreographed by Edwaard Liang, artistic director of The Washington Ballet.

Liang's dazzling production doesn't just reimagine a classic—it reminds us of the power of artistic vision to reflect, challenge and transform the world around us. And that sentiment runs through this month's feature story, which profiles a remarkable group of artistic directors who are redefining the cultural fabric of the nation's capital. From Hana Sharif at Arena Stage to Karen Ann Daniels at Folger Theatre, and from the boldness of Signature's Matthew Gardiner to the historic lens of Paul Tetreault at Ford's, these leaders are dreamers and doers. They balance imagination with execution in ways our political class might well emulate.

Their stories, passions and programs breathe life into a city that can sometimes feel paralyzed by its own headlines. It's through their artistry—whether on stage, in galleries or behind the scenes—that Washington reclaims its soul. And in this issue, we're thrilled to spotlight their journeys, challenges and the bold productions they are championing this spring.

Of course, no April issue would be complete without capturing the swirl of the season's social calendar. From the high-energy sparkle of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's 25th annual gala at



the Kennedy Center to the poignant celebration of women's leadership at the Women Making History Awards at The Anthem, we were front and center. Mosaic Theater's 10th Anniversary Celebration was a vibrant reminder of how essential local voices are to national conversations, while Nordstrom's Carolina Herrera Dinner added a welcome note of elegance and philanthropy to our city's ever-chic style scene.

In many ways, these events—and the people behind them—anchor a moment that otherwise feels unmoored. They remind us that even when politics veer into parody, Washington's creative class continues to inspire with clarity, courage

and grace. So, as we tumble through the looking glass once again, let us take our cues not from chaos, but from the choreographers, directors and designers who still believe in the alchemy of art.

Because Washington's wonderland isn't just a metaphor—it's a mindset. And if we're lucky, it's also a stage.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nancy R. Bagley".

Nancy R. Bagley
Editor in Chief

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Edna Kane Williams and Anthony A. Lewis



Yannick Lebrun and Mila Jam

ALVIN AILEY 25TH ANNUAL GALA

The Kennedy Center | PHOTOS BY TONY POWELL

TALENT AND VISION: With a repertoire that features nearly 300 pieces by over 100 choreographers, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has graced stages in more than 70 nations across six continents and has been celebrated as a "Vital American Cultural Ambassador to the World" and Ailey did not disappoint the packed Kennedy Center Opera House audience during an extraordinary one-night-only gala performance, followed by an evening soirée at the Nations Gallery. The funds raised benefit the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation and support the company's local initiatives. **CO-CHAIRS:** Sela Thompson Collins, Anthony A. Lewis, Lisa Warner Wardell, Yelberton R. Watkins along with corporate chairman **Chris Womack**, President and CEO of Southern Company.



Lata Reddy and Jaishri Kapoor



Samantha Figgins in Alvin Ailey's Cry



Company members



Bryan Anderson, Sela Thompson Collins, Matthew Rushing, and Yelberton Watkins



Bennett Rink, Joyce Brayboy, Lawrence Duncan and Michael Collins



DJ Brian Henry



Lyndon Bpozer and John Mason