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**ALICIA GRAF MACK, RENOWNED DANCER, EDUCATOR, AND INSTITUTIONAL LEADER,
APPOINTED ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF AILEY**



Photograph: Gregory Costanzo

(NEW YORK) November 21, 2024 – The Board of Trustees of Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation today announced that Alicia Graf Mack, widely celebrated for her dance artistry during her years with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and for her leadership as the Dean and Director of the Dance Division of The Juilliard School, has been appointed Artistic Director of AILEY. She becomes the fourth Artistic Director in AILEY’s 66-year history, following Alvin Ailey, Judith Jamison (herself a renowned star of the Company), and Robert Battle. Ms. Graf Mack will assume her role with AILEY as of July 1, 2025.

News of Ms. Graf Mack’s appointment follows shortly after the death at age 81 of Artistic Director Emerita Judith Jamison, who brought Alicia Graf Mack into Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and championed her work. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater’s 2024-25 season, which begins on December 4, celebrates the life and legacy of Ms. Jamison.

Daria L. Wallach, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, said, “Living heritage is central to the artistic achievement of Alvin Ailey, and it is just as integral to AILEY as an organization. As we pass the artistic leadership of AILEY to Alicia Graf Mack, who was introduced to Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater under Judith Jamison’s direction, performed under the leadership of Robert Battle, and electrified the Company’s audiences around the nation and the world, we honor and celebrate the legacy that goes back to Mr. Ailey himself. We know that this powerful continuity across the generations, combined with Ms. Graf Mack’s outstanding talents as a dance artist, educator, administrator, and communicator, will ensure that both the traditions and the innovation of AILEY remain strong for years to come.”

Anthony A. Lewis, Board member and head of the selection committee, said, “Out of the many gifted and highly qualified candidates we reviewed as part of an extensive search process, Alicia Graf Mack rose to become our clear-cut choice. Her record of success at The Juilliard School, her profound connection with AILEY, and the intangible personal and professional qualities she possesses make her an exceptional leader. We are convinced that she is the Artistic Director for AILEY’s future.”

Alicia Graf Mack said, “It’s the honor of a lifetime to step into this role and continue the legacy of Alvin Ailey—a legacy rooted in celebrating the beauty and resilience of the human spirit. I am committed to preserving the company’s rich heritage while boldly exploring new voices and perspectives that push the boundaries of dance and reflect the world we live in today, and the world we hope to see. I am deeply grateful to AILEY’s Board for placing its trust in me, and am particularly mindful at this moment of the abiding influence of Judith Jamison, who brought me into this extraordinary organization and will forever be an inspiration to me and present in all of us. To all the dancers who have embodied Mr. Ailey’s vision, to Robert Battle, and to the artistic team including the wonderful Matthew Rushing, who have carried AILEY into the present as such a vibrant and indispensable artistic force, I offer my profound thanks. I will give my all to live up to this great responsibility, in service to the Company, our many supporters, our beloved audiences, and the entire AILEY community everywhere.”

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater’s annual five-week holiday engagement at New York City Center from December 4 through January 5 has been prepared by Interim Artistic Director Matthew Rushing. This year’s Opening Night Gala, honoring legendary dance educator Jody Gottfried Arnhold, will feature the return of Ronald K. Brown’s *Grace* on its 25th anniversary, with live music by Tony® and GRAMMY® Award-winning artist Leslie Odom, Jr. with composer, visual artist, and GRAMMY® Award-winning vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant. The finale of Mr. Ailey’s *Cry* will also be performed, to pay tribute to Judith Jamison, who originated the role and ignited the ballet with her unparalleled grace and power. Celebrating the life and legacy of Artistic Director Emerita Judith Jamison, the season will showcase the world premieres of *Sacred Songs* by Matthew Rushing, *Finding Free* by Hope Boykin, *Many Angels* by Lar Lubovitch (his first world premiere for the Company), and *Al-Andalus Blues* by Jamar Roberts, as well as a new production of Elisa Monte’s *Treading* and a generous selection of classic repertoire by Alvin Ailey and live music performances.

Bennett Rink, Executive Director of AILEY, said, “Carrying forward into a new generation the bold vision of our founder, Alvin Ailey, and building upon the major achievements of Judith Jamison and Robert Battle in developing our organization, Alicia Graf Mack will place the unique stamp of her own leadership on AILEY while remaining true to our heritage. Knowing the great respect she has for Mr. Ailey’s legacy and her comprehensive understanding of the multiple artistic, educational, and social roles that the AILEY organization plays in the world, I look forward with the greatest enthusiasm to working with her as AILEY takes its next steps into an exciting future.”

As Artistic Director, Alicia Graf Mack will oversee the artistic program of the entire AILEY organization, which includes Ailey II, The Ailey School, Ailey Arts In Education & Community Programs, and Ailey Extension. Alvin Ailey said, “Dance is for everybody. I believe that dance came from the people and that it should always be delivered back to the people.” Today, AILEY is one of the world’s leading modern dance companies and a global ambassador of American culture, deftly weaving performance, education, and community programming together to celebrate the human spirit and inspire, enlighten, and unite people of all backgrounds. AILEY is currently partnering with the Whitney Museum of American Art to present *Edges of Ailey* (through February 9, 2025), the first large-scale exhibition to celebrate the life, creativity, influence, and enduring legacy of Alvin Ailey. For more info, visit www.ailey.org.

About Alicia Graf Mack

Alicia Graf Mack starred as a principal dancer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater from 2005 to 2008 and again from 2011 to 2014 and now returns to serve as AILEY's fourth Artistic Director. She comes to AILEY from The Juilliard School, where she has been the Dean and Director of the Dance Division since 2018.

Born in San Jose, California, Alicia Graf Mack grew up in Columbia, Maryland, was offered an apprenticeship at Dance Theatre of Harlem by Arthur Mitchell while in high school, and relocated to New York City at age 17 to join the company. During a hiatus from Dance Theatre of Harlem, she earned a bachelor's degree magna cum laude in history from Columbia University School of General Studies, then rejoined DTH until the company was temporarily disbanded in 2004. She also holds an MA in nonprofit management from Washington University in St. Louis.

In addition to dancing with DTH and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, she has been a principal dancer with Complexions Contemporary Ballet and has danced as a guest performer with Alonzo King's LINES Ballet, Beyoncé, John Legend, Andre 3000, and Alicia Keys. She performed in honor of Carmen de Lavallade at the Kennedy Center Honors 2018 and was also invited to perform in the memorial services of Arthur Mitchell at Riverside Church in New York City and Jessye Norman at the Metropolitan Opera.

In 2007, *Smithsonian* magazine named her an American Innovator of the Arts and Sciences. She is a recipient of the Columbia University Medal of Excellence, an award given each year to an alumnus who has demonstrated excellence in their field of work, and in 2008 delivered the keynote address to the graduates of Columbia University's School of General Studies. She is the recipient of the 2023 *Dance Magazine* Award.

Before assuming leadership of the Dance Division of Juilliard, she co-founded D(n)A Arts Collective, an initiative created with her sister to enrich the lives of young dancers through master classes and intensives, taught as an adjunct faculty member at the University of Houston, and served as a visiting assistant professor at Webster University.

Ms. Graf Mack serves on the Boards of Columbia University School of General Studies and Camille A. Brown and Dancers. In addition, she volunteers her time and talent to the summer intensive of the Art Saves Lives Foundation in St. Maarten. She is the co-producer and host of the podcast *Moving Moments*, featuring conversations with some of the most celebrated and ground-breaking artists in the field of dance.

About AILEY

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, recognized by US Congressional resolution as a "vital American Cultural Ambassador to the World," grew from a now-fabled March 1958 performance in New York that changed forever the perception of American dance. Forged during a pivotal moment in the civil rights movement, the Company was established to uplift the African American experience while transcending boundaries of race, faith, and nationality with its universal humanity. Before his untimely death in 1989, Mr. Ailey named Judith Jamison as his successor, and for 21 years she brought the Company to unprecedented success. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has performed for an estimated 25 million people in 71 countries on six continents, promoting the uniqueness of the African American cultural experience and the preservation and enrichment of the American modern dance tradition. In addition to being the principal dance company of New York City Center, where its performances have become a year-end tradition, the Company performs annually at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC; the Auditorium Theatre in Chicago; The Fox Theatre in Atlanta; Zellerbach Hall in Berkeley, CA; and at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark (where it is the Principal Resident Affiliate), and appears frequently in other major theaters throughout the world during extensive tours. AILEY also includes Ailey II, a second performing company of emerging young dancers and innovative choreographers; The Ailey School, one of the most extensive dance training programs in the world; Ailey Arts In Education & Community Programs, which brings dance into the classrooms, communities, and lives of people of all ages; and Ailey Extension, a program offering dance and fitness classes to the general public, which began with the opening of AILEY's permanent home, The Joan Weill Center for Dance—the largest building dedicated to dance in New York City—at 55th Street at 9th Avenue in New York City. For more information, visit www.ailey.org.