



AILEY RECEIVES MAJOR GIFT FROM BOARD CHAIR DARIA L. WALLACH TO ENDOW THE POSITION OF ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

\$10 Million Endowment Gift Enables Long-Term Creative Innovation Under Leadership of AILEY's New Artistic Director Alicia Graf Mack



Photo Credits: Ailey's 2025 Opening Night Gala Honoree Daria L. Wallach and Co-Chair Eric J. Wallach. Photo by Pete Monsanto; Bennett Rink, Daria L. and Eric J. Wallach and members of AILEY's Board of Trustees with Alicia Graf Mack at AILEY Artistic Director Welcome Event. Photo by Christopher Duggan; Alicia Graf Mack, Bennett Rink, Daria L. Wallach visiting Children's Aid/AileyCamp New York. Photo by Danica Paulos. **CTRL+ CLICK ON PHOTOS FOR HI-RES DOWNLOAD.**

NEW YORK – February 4, 2026 — Bennett Rink, Executive Director of the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, announced today that Daria L. Wallach, Chair of AILEY's Board of Trustees, has made a landmark \$10 million gift to endow the position of Artistic Director. In recognition of the historic importance of this contribution, leaders who hold the role will now be known as the Daria L. and Eric J. Wallach Artistic Director.

Bennett Rink said, “It is not uncommon for the leaders of art museums to hold endowed positions, but in the field of dance it is extremely rare to have such cornerstone support. We are immensely grateful to Daria Wallach for having the vision to create this endowment, and by doing so to give AILEY the flexibility to invest in artistic initiatives, foster new talent, and extend the artistic excellence that has defined the Company for more than six decades.”

Daria L. Wallach said, “I have a long history with AILEY and have witnessed the deep impact of its artistic excellence on our students, audiences, and the broader community. What AILEY does has the power to move us emotionally and intellectually, to foster connection, to inspire and heal. At this pivotal moment in the Company's history, I want to make sure that this continues by demonstrating my confidence in AILEY's future, which I know will be brilliant under Alicia Graf Mack's superb leadership.”

Alicia Graf Mack, AILEY's fourth Artistic Director (after Alvin Ailey, Judith Jamison, and Robert Battle) and the first to hold the endowed title, said, “It is a true honor to assume this title and to celebrate Daria Wallach's transformative gift. Daria's generosity and guidance have shaped AILEY in profound ways, and because of that commitment, we are better equipped than ever to create boldly, invest in future generations of artists, and expand access to Alvin Ailey's extensive legacy.”

The endowment gift was announced as Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater begins its 2026 national tour—its first under Alicia Graf Mack’s leadership—which takes the Company to 20 cities across the United States, from January 30 through May 10. The next-generation company, Ailey II, is meanwhile carrying the AILEY legacy forward on its simultaneous tour, which will include a seven-performance engagement at New York City’s Joyce Theater.

As Daria L. and Eric J. Wallach Artistic Director of AILEY, Alicia Graf Mack is currently driving the direction of the entire organization including Ailey II, The Ailey School, AILEY Arts in Education & Community Programs, AileyCamp, and Ailey Extension. She is committed to preserving Mr. Ailey’s vision while emphasizing creativity and innovation that can help inspire the dance community as a whole.

Daria L. Wallach joined the Board of Trustees of AILEY in 2011 and has served as its Chair since 2014. A veteran leader of the financial services industry, she is the retired Managing Partner of Lord, Abbett & Co. LLC and President and Director of Lord Abbett Mutual Funds. Among her other philanthropic commitments, she is Chair of ReadWorks – a nonprofit EdTech company – a Board member of Naples Art Institute and United Arts Collier, and past Vice Chair of the New York Philharmonic.

A star performer on the Ailey stage, where she enjoyed a spectacular career between 2005 and 2014, Alicia Graf Mack was brought into the Company and mentored by the incomparable Judith Jamison. After Ms. Graf Mack’s retirement from performing, she went on to distinguish herself as the Dean and Director of the Dance Division of The Juilliard School from 2018 to 2025. She returned to AILEY in 2025 as only the fourth Artistic Director in the company’s nearly 70-year history and has now led Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater into a new season, guided as ever by Alvin Ailey’s pioneering legacy.

ABOUT ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

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. Alicia Graf Mack, widely celebrated for her dance artistry during her years with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, was appointed Artistic Director of AILEY as of July 1, 2025. 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 holiday tradition, the Ailey company performs annually at 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 (1974), a second performing company of emerging young dancers and innovative choreographers; The Ailey School (1969), one of the most extensive dance training programs in the world; Ailey Arts In Education & Community Programs (1992), which brings dance into the classrooms, communities, and lives of people of all ages; and Ailey Extension (2005), a program offering dance and fitness classes to the general public, which began with the opening of Ailey’s permanent home—the largest building dedicated to dance in New York City, the dance capital of the world—named The Joan Weill Center for Dance, at 55th Street at 9th Avenue in New York City. For more information, visit ailey.org.

ABOUT ARTISTIC DIRECTOR ALICIA GRAF MACK

[Alicia Graf Mack](#) was a star performer on the Ailey stage during a spectacular career between 2005 and 2014, when she was brought into the company and mentored by the incomparable Judith Jamison. She now returns to serve as AILEY's fourth Artistic Director, after distinguishing herself as the Dean and Director of Dance Division of The Juilliard School from 2018-2025. Born in San Jose, CA, Ms. Graf Mack grew up in Columbia, MD. She began her career with Dance Theatre of Harlem under the direction of Arthur Mitchell and ascended to become a highly recognized principal ballerina. A celebrated artist, she performed with Complexions Contemporary Ballet and made guest appearances with Alonzo King LINES Ballet. Her versatility led to collaborations with artists including Beyoncé, John Legend, Andre 3000, Alicia Keys, and Jon Batiste. Ms. Graf Mack has graced the stages of major galas and festivals, performed tributes to luminaries including Carmen de Lavallade and danced at the memorial services for Arthur Mitchell at NYC's Riverside Church and Jessye Norman at the Metropolitan Opera House. A Columbia University graduate (magna cum laude, honors in history), she also holds an MA in nonprofit management from Washington University in St. Louis. Some of her many honors are the prestigious 2023 Dance Magazine Award, Smithsonian Magazine's American Innovator of the Arts and Sciences, and the Ebony Power 100 List of influential Black leaders and innovators. Other accolades include an honorary doctorate from The Juilliard School in 2025, Columbia University's Medal of Excellence, keynote addresses at Columbia's School of General Studies in 2008 and 2025, and the 2025 Columbia Black Alumni Heritage Award. Before arriving at Juilliard, Ms. Graf Mack was an assistant professor at Webster University and an adjunct professor at the University of Houston and Washington University. She hosted 3 seasons of *Moving Moments*, a podcast in which she interviews colleagues and friends to discuss the creative process and living a purposeful life in dance and is now working on a new podcast at AILEY, to launch in 2026.

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