

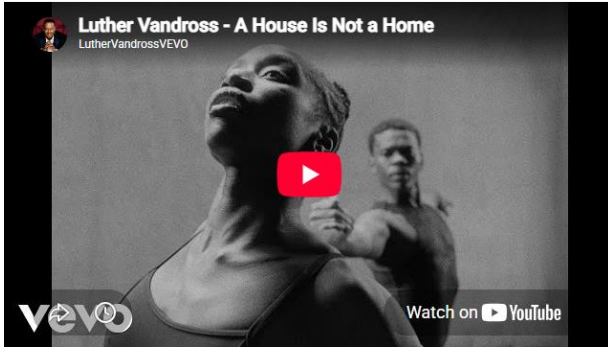


SZA, Tonya Lee & Spike Lee Named Honorary Chairs for Alvin Ailey Season-Opening Gala

Dance company will world premiere new "Power of Love" collaboration inspired by music legend Luther Vandross.

By: Gail Mitchell

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Grammy Award winner SZA and award-winning filmmakers Tonya Lee and Spike Lee have been named honorary chairs for the Opening Night Gala (Dec. 2) kicking off the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's 2026-27 season. The company's five-week holiday season at New York City Center runs through Jan. 3, 2027.

The gala highlight will be the world premiere of [Power of Love](#) in honor of the legendary Luther Vandross. Choreographed by Jamar Roberts, *Power of Love* was created in collaboration with Primary Wave Music and The Luther Vandross Estate.

"I am so proud and excited to be opening our season with a major new collaboration inspired by Luther Vandross, a groundbreaking musical genius whose inimitable voice and timeless songs have been treasured since his first solo album 45 years ago," stated Alicia Graf Mack, the Daria L. and Eric J. Wallach Artistic Director of AILEY.

In the same press announcement, SZA commented, "My mother and I go to Alvin Ailey every year for Mother's Day. Revelations has informed both of our lives greatly. I love Luther and I'm honored to be a part of something so integral to our history, Black expression and creativity."

Power of Love's world premiere will take place after Vandross is inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame on Nov. 14 in Los Angeles. In addition to its namesake classic, the show will feature other memorable Vandross hits such as "Never Too Much," "Here and Now," "Dance With My Father" and "A House Is Not a Home" (see the video below). The eight-time Grammy winner's longtime creative collaborators Marcus Miller and Ron Gilyard, in partnership with writer/director/producer Reginald Hudlin, developed the dance and music tribute.

"Luther and Ailey are a match made in heaven," said Miller. "Ron and I dove in, and with the help of our dear friend, film director Reginald Hudlin, we took on the task of making this project come to life in a way Luther would be proud of. We chose which songs to include which reflected the breadth of Luther's career and could also translate well to dance. We made slightly new arrangements of a few songs and added some small touches to tickle the ear with some musical surprises."

Rounding out the opening night gala will be an excerpt of [Hymn](#), Artistic Director Emerita Judith Jamison's Emmy Award-winning tribute to Alvin Ailey. The presentation marks the tribute's return to the repertory after almost 15 years. Still in formation, the Opening Night Gala's honorary committee currently includes Cynthia Erivo, LL Cool J, Samara Joy, Gayle King, and Audra McDonald, among others. Gala proceeds benefit the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, including new works and student scholarships. Gala ticket information is available [HERE](#).

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