

BESSIE DISCUSSIONS HELD THIS SUMMER

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By Lucy Sexton

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After working with the Bessie Steering Committee---responsible for general governance of the awards, and the Bessie Committee---responsible for choosing the work to be honored at this year's ceremony, since January, I decided we needed to hear from more voices before launching the new and improved Bessie Awards. To that end I asked the members of both committees---a total of nearly 30 people---to suggest 4 or 5 people that might be interested in talking about the Bessie Awards and how they might best serve the dance community. There were four terrific discussions held with those who responded. I wanted to keep the gatherings small and focused so that they could truly be discussions rather than town halls with question/answer periods. Attendees included members of the original Bessie Committee from the 80s as well as young dancers who had never attended a Bessie ceremony. They included dance makers, writers, curators, dancers, and dance teachers. And the discussions were incredibly fruitful and full of intelligence and passion. Questions we struggled with were: how to serve a wider community of dancers, how to make the awards more transparent both to dancers and the general public, how to structure the committee or to envision a new method of voting for award-winning work, and perhaps most important: what is valuable about these awards and how can we build on that going forward.

If you'd like to hear more about these discussions or who participated, let me know and I'll post as much info as I can.

Thanks to everyone for their energy and support.

Lucy

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