

A DANCE MERGER, AND NOW A SEASON

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The Wall Street Journal
By PIA CATTON

New York Live Arts, the new entity created by the merger of the Chelsea venue Dance Theater Workshop and the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, will announce its inaugural year of programs and performances on Wednesday.

The organization is setting out an aggressive plan to support dance artists by offering them not only a stage, but off-stage guidance that will enable them to continue making work. While the support will be for choreographers who are at various stages in their careers, there will be an emphasis on those who are past the point of being "the next new thing," but not yet a go-to choreographer.

"There is a lot of support for emerging talent, then you have a handful of established artists who are frequently presented," said the new company's executive director, Jean Davidson. "But the best and brightest mid-career artists were leaving the field."

The most significant effort is the Resident Commissioned Artist Program: Each year, one mid-career artist will be given the rare package of a salary, health benefits, a two-year residency and a commission; the 2011-13 recipient will be Japanese-born Yasuko Yokoshi, who has been working in New York since 1986.

Additionally, the Dance Theater Workshop Commissioning Fund will annually seek out and present new work from a group of artists who will also receive administrative support. The fund will enable choreographers to be sponsored under New York Live Arts's nonprofit, 501(c)3 status—rather than having to set up their own company, a practice that has proved difficult to sustain for aspiring choreographers.

NYLA's first presenting season, starting Sept. 16, will be 10 months long and will include the work of contemporary choreographers involved in additional support programs.

"It's not just about showing your work, but what do artists need to carve out a career for themselves?" said artistic director Carla Peterson. "That has been the question for the artists who choose to stay in New York City."

A highlight of the season will be the Replay Series, which will feature popular, remounted works by established artists. Ms. Peterson described it as a balance between heeding "the most current artistic thinking, but encouraging a kind of dance literacy. It's important to not be connected to only the tyranny of the new."

The joining of a venue and a dance company was a rare move in the arts world, but executive artistic director Bill T. Jones sees the new organization's future as both an evolution and a link with the past. "DTW actually gave me and Arnie Zane life," he said, referring to the early days of his own dance company.

Now Mr. Jones is in a position to pay it forward: "In this organization, we pride ourselves on supporting artists across the spectrum, and we are trying to stand by what we say."

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