SHARON GERSTEN LUCKMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ALVIN AILEY DANCE FOUNDATION, TO STEP DOWN IN 2013

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NEW YORK, NY [January 25, 2012] -- Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation today announced that after two decades of accomplishments with the Ailey organization—16 of them as the organization's Executive Director—Sharon Gersten Luckman is planning to step down in 2013, in order to pursue new endeavors.

Over the past twenty years, Ms. Luckman has strategized and overseen the dramatic growth and success of the entire Ailey organization: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Ailey II, The Ailey School, The Ailey Extension and Ailey Arts in Education & Community Programs, as well as the creation of the organization's state-of-the-art home and studio building, The Joan Weill Center for Dance, which opened in 2005. In so doing, Ms. Luckman has established one of the most remarkable records in American arts management for program development, marketing, promotion and branding, fundraising, financial stability and overall excellence.

In consultation with Ms. Luckman, a committee of the Board of Trustees has retained the executive search firm of Phillips Oppenheim to begin an international search to identify the next Executive Director of the Ailey organization.

"I consider myself extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to work side by side with the superb staff and brilliant dancers of the Ailey organization, with two magnificent Artistic Directors, Judith Jamison and Robert Battle, with our wonderful Associate Artistic Director Masazumi Chaya, and with a deeply dedicated Board of Trustees under the invaluable leadership of Joan Weill," Sharon Luckman stated. "At Ailey, we often speak of ourselves as a family. I am very proud of what my family has accomplished over these past decades—and although I will now be moving on to other endeavors, I know I will always feel I'm a part of Ailey."

It is expected that the new Executive Director of the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation will be named by early 2013. Ms. Luckman, 66, will remain fully active for the next year and a half and will help facilitate a smooth transition to the company's new executive leadership.

"We are all deeply grateful to Sharon Luckman for guiding the Ailey organization with incomparable skill, strength and creativity," stated Joan H. Weill, Chairman of the Board of Trustees. "She has led us to a position of stability, prominence and public engagement that has truly set an extraordinary standard in the field of dance. The way she has planned this transition is entirely in keeping with her management style, making sure that we're able to stay on the course she has so expertly set. And on a personal level, it has been a great pleasure to work with Sharon all these years."

Ms. Luckman took an active role in the process of selecting Robert Battle to succeed Judith Jamison as Artistic Director of Ailey and planned her transition to begin now, after Mr. Battle had successfully launched his first season.

"Much like the Ailey dancers' extraordinary performances onstage, Sharon Luckman has been performing amazingly behind the scenes," Robert Battle stated. "She can execute three dozen managerial moves at once, all based on her own organizational choreography, and never lose her sense of absolute poise. I can't thank her enough for what she's built for our audiences and community, and for what she's enabled me to do artistically."

Institutional Growth

Sharon Luckman's tenure with Ailey began in 1992, when she was appointed Director of Development. In that role, she was responsible for planning and implementing all fundraising efforts for all of Ailey's programs, including Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Ailey II, The Ailey School, and Ailey Arts in Education & Community Programs. During her first season, the Company increased donations from corporations, foundations, government agencies and individuals by more than 50 percent. Since assuming her role as Executive Director in 1995, she has built a Board of Trustees of corporate and community leaders that has been praised as one of the most diverse and impressive boards among arts organizations in the nation.

Under her leadership, the Ailey organization has experienced 16 years of dramatic growth and fiscal stability, with more than a three-fold increase in its operating budget and fundraising, as well as growth of net assets from $300,000 to $134 million.

Ms. Luckman was also instrumental in establishing a unique BFA degree program with Fordham University, which gives serious dance students the opportunity to study full time at both The Ailey School and Fordham University, offering them a world-class artistic and academic education. She has also overseen the growth of AileyCamps for at-risk children, from two to ten sites nationwide, and negotiated groundbreaking international appearances by Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in South Africa, Russia and China. Most recently she led the Ailey organization's successful Artistic Director transition and negotiated a long-term arrangement naming Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater as the principal dance company of New York City Center.

In 2005, the Ailey organization opened a new facility, The Joan Weill Center for Dance – the largest facility devoted exclusively to dance in the Northeast. Ms. Luckman orchestrated the project from its planning in 1997 through completion, and launched a successful capital campaign to raise $75 million in funds for the building and to establish an endowment for the organization. In conjunction with the opening of the new building, she inaugurated The Ailey Extension, a program of dance and fitness classes experienced by more than 48,000 members of the general public.

For Ailey's 50th Anniversary, Ms. Luckman directed the planning and implementation of a series of special performances, projects and free events that heightened the organization's profile and set an incomparable standard for marketing, public relations and corporate sponsorships. She instigated key branding initiatives that brought world-wide recognition to the Ailey name through merchandise such as CDs, DVDs, Hallmark greeting cards, an Ailey Barbie doll by Mattel and two new books.

Sharon Luckman: A Brief Biography

A native of Long Beach, NY, Sharon Luckman began her career as a dance teacher and went on to direct New York's 92nd Street YM/WHA Dance Center from 1978-1986. She later became Development Director and then Executive Director of Twyla Tharp Dance Foundation and for three years was Executive Director of Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts. Additionally, she has taught Arts Administration courses at New York University's School of Continuing Education. Formerly Chairman of the Board of the Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement, she has also served on the Board of Trustees of Dance/USA. Ms. Luckman has received the Arts & Business Council's Encore Award for Arts Management Excellence, the Arts Management Award for Career Service, the Signature Award for Community Leadership from the National Association of Women Business Owners and The Alumni Achievement Award from the University of Wisconsin, which recognizes a career of extraordinary accomplishment and is the highest honor bestowed by the School of Education. She holds a B.S. from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and a Certificate from Columbia University's Institute for Not-for-Profit Management.

About Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

Seen by an estimated 23,000,000 fans in 48 states and 71 countries on six continents, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has been recognized by U.S. Congressional resolution as a vital American "Cultural Ambassador to the World" and as a trailblazing leader in concert dance. The Company and the Ailey organization received National Medal of Arts awards in 2002.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater debuted its 2011-12 season—Robert Battle's first as the company's new Artistic Director—at the newly restored and renovated New York City Center where Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater was named Principal Dance Company in November 2011. From February through May, the company will be performing on a 27-city North American tour, including stops over the next month in Washington, DC, Atlanta, GA, and Miami, FL, the hometown of new Artistic Director Robert Battle.

For further information, the public may visit www.alvinailey.org.

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