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[Will Take the Helm of the Ailey Organization As Sharon Gersten Luckman Steps Down After 18 Years of Leadership In The Beginning of 2013](#)

NEW YORK, NY, October 17, 2012 — The Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation today announced that after an international search to identify a new Executive Director, the Board of Trustees has chosen to continue the Ailey tradition of passing on leadership from one generation of the organization to the next by naming Bennett Rink to the post. Mr. Rink, Ailey's current Senior Director of Development and External Affairs, will succeed Sharon Gersten Luckman, who hired him in 1994, and who announced at the beginning of 2012 that she would step aside as Executive Director at the beginning of 2013.

"The Board's search committee reviewed a roster of outstanding candidates, but we found that the best of all was here at home," said Joan H. Weill, Chairman of the Board of Trustees. "Bennett Rink long ago won the trust and respect of the entire Ailey organization, which he has come to know inside and out working side-by-side with Sharon Luckman over the past eighteen years. Following the standard set by Sharon, we look forward to Bennett's brilliant leadership and are excited about the future as she passes the torch to him."

Sharon Gersten Luckman stated, "I could not be more thrilled with this richly deserved appointment. I've witnessed Bennett's continual growth and achievements as an extraordinary arts administrator. He's a master at working in a collaborative way and has established positive relationships throughout Ailey's constituents, from artistic staff to corporate sponsors. He's a strategic thinker with a clear focus on achieving important goals. Bennett is very ready to be a strong leader of this multifaceted Ailey organization."

Robert Battle, Artistic Director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, commented, "I look forward to working with Bennett, continuing the tradition of partnering with a great Executive Director. He has been an integral part of the Ailey family, with a remarkable combination of skills, character and dedication to the organization's success. As we take the next steps on Ailey's journey, I have complete confidence in Bennett and the important role he will play in our future."

Bennett Rink stated, "I'm honored and grateful to Joan, the Board, Robert, and everyone at Ailey but particularly Sharon who has been an extraordinary mentor to me over the years. She exemplifies the passion, commitment and singular focus that have been such an integral part of this organization since the days of Mr. Ailey himself. I cherish the great legacy I am being entrusted with and I intend to keep it vital and growing for the sake of our dancers and teachers, our students of all ages and our wonderful audiences around the world."

A graduate of Syracuse University with a B.F.A. in theater, Bennett Rink served as Associate Development Director of the Lawrence A. Wein Center for Dance and Theater and as Assistant to the President of The New 42nd Street before joining Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation in 1994, as Manager of Special Events. He was named Development Director in 1998 and in 2007 was appointed Senior Director of Development and External Affairs. In that position, he has overseen all of the Foundation's fundraising, marketing and public relations activities.

From his first days with Ailey, Bennett Rink has worked with Sharon Luckman, who began her tenure in 1992 as Director of Development and in 1995 was named Executive Director. Over the course of two decades, she 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 the Arts In Education program, 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. 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.

Bennett Rink's appointment is the most recent in a series of leadership transitions in which people within the Ailey family have taken over for legendary, long-time figures. In 2010, Tracy Inman and Melanie Person succeeded the late Denise Jefferson as co-directors of The Ailey School. In 2011 Robert Battle succeeded Judith Jamison as the new Artistic Director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. And in 2012, Troy Powell succeeded Sylvia Waters as the new Artistic Director of Ailey II.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater will pay tribute to Sharon Gersten Luckman with a special performance on Tuesday, December 4, as part of the company's 2012 season at New York City Center from November 28 through December 30.

ABOUT ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

Seen by an estimated 23,000,000 fans in 48 states and 71 countries on six continents, the 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 Ailey organization received National Medal of Arts awards in 2002.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater debuted its December 2011 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. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's 2012 New York City Center season engagement from November 28 through December 30, will include a special tribute evening to Sharon Gersten Luckman on Tuesday, December 4. From February through May, the company will be performing on a 20-city North American tour.