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Monday, October 3, 2011

Celebrating Beverly D'Anne

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When: October 3, 2011

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, American Ballet Theatre, Dance/NYC, The Joyce Theater, New York City Ballet and the wider NYC dance community came together to celebrate Beverly D'Anne for her contributions to dance in New York. Beverly's remarks to the field are below.



Photo credit: Samantha Siegel

What an overwhelming moment - - to have so many of you here that I so admire. It is true, the most meaningful recognition comes from one's peers.

First of all, I must thank the hosts who were instrumental in making this event happen--all of whom have played a significant part in my dance life--the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, American Ballet Theatre, the New York City Ballet, The Joyce Theater, Dance/NYC and three very good friends, Judith Hoffman, Arlene Cooper and Joan Ades. I also want to thank my wonderful, longtime colleague in the Dance Program at NYSCA, Debbie Lim, and the extraordinary Arnie Apostol, and the many, many interns I was fortunate to mentor over the years. And a huge "thank-you" to the numerous individuals who did yeoman service as members of the Dance Panel--the very heart of the evaluative proceedings at the Council. When I received a Bessie Award, I was chided, by others, for not thanking my husband, Guy Mognaz. I actually thought it went without saying - -but now I'll say it. Thank you, Guy, for being so understanding and putting up with my craziness as I turned myself over to the job--often 7 days and nights a week. Luckily, he likes dance a lot!

As I've said frequently over the past few weeks, I've left the New York State Council on the Arts, but I haven't left dance and I never could - - it has been my life, virtually all of my life. I was "hooked" when I took my first ballet class at the age of three, and I have never wavered in my passion for the art form. That passion is what has sustained me - -the trying times fade away and I know it is all worthwhile, when I sit in a darkened theatre and witness a transcendent performance.

I believe that NY remains the dance capital of the nation, if not the world, and yet dance is still the most impoverished of the disciplines and perhaps the least understood. I have always seen my role as being an advocate for dance--fighting to help quality dance, in all of its aesthetic permutations, continue to flourish--nurturing and productively acknowledging the value of the creative process. I tried to be a resource for the field, while at the same time, the field was an invaluable resource for me. Working on a close one-to-one basis with the artists and the administrators was not only inspiring but also enabled the development of funding initiatives that evolved organically out of the perceived needs in the field. I am proud that those initiatives have really made a difference in the dance landscape - -support for Long-term Residencies and the NY State DanceForce; subsidy for Rehearsal Spaces, so that choreographers are provided the time and an appropriate and affordable venue in which to make dances; encouraging the enrichment of repertoires through the Commissioning of new works and restagings, despite the inherent riskiness of the endeavour; and the Building Ballet Repertory category - -which was all about "process"--unfortunately, no longer

a funding possibility at the Council, but living on through many such projects that have grown out of the concept.

I readily admit that I championed artistic quality above all else--believing that what you see on the stage is what counts above all else. If any art form is to keep "live" performance alive, it will be dance - - for only in the three dimensionality of live performance can the very ephemeral and very human glories of dance become completely comprehensible. As the Council's way of thinking and my way of thinking became more and more divergent, it was time to part ways.

I know my salary was paid for by the State, but I always felt that I worked for the dance artists and organizations--hopefully, contributing to the process of making good art happen I tried never to lose sight of the fact that it is the choreographers, the dancers, the artistic directors that made my job possible - -not the other way around - -and so should it ever be.

I love an old French proverb that says, "What cannot be spoken, must be sung, and what cannot be sung, must be danced." Dance, as an art form, is a medium for communicating those levels of consciousness which are beyond the power of being conveyed by verbalization. And I only wish I could dance for you right now, as words are not eloquent enough to express my gratitude for having chosen to spend my life in dance and to be so rewarded.

Thank you all - - for your recognition, for your support, and most important, for your steadfast friendship.

--- BEVERLY D'ANNE

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