
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Photograph of The Mourner's Bench by Sharen Bradford - The Dancing Image.

**DALLAS BLACK DANCE THEATRE PORTRAYS STRUGGLES
FOLLOWING THE CIVIL WAR AND DURING THE CIVIL RIGHTS ERA
IN VIRTUAL CULTURAL AWARENESS PERFORMANCE**

Dallas, TX – **Dallas Black Dance Theatre (DBDT)** produces dramatic lessons on two historic periods: the reconstruction period following the Civil War and the Civil Rights Era. Music plays a vital role in both dances: *ODETTA* by **Matthew Rushing** and *The Mourner's Bench* by **Talley Beatty**. The repertoire will be reinvented and newly filmed in unique locations to make for a robust cinematic experience. **Wells Fargo** is the presenting sponsor for the virtual performance scheduled for Saturday, February 20, 2021, at 7:00 CST / 8:00 pm EST. The choreography is sponsored by **Nancy A. Nasher and David J. Haemisegger**.

The choreographic brilliance of the late **Talley Beatty** is exemplified in *The Mourner's Bench*. Beatty created the solo in 1947, which portrays an emotional, spiritual struggle with social inequity in the rural South after the Civil War. "Sitting on the mourner's bench," the dancer reflects on the horror of oppression that is happening to his community. The work is set to the traditional spiritual *There is a Balm in Gilead*. Beatty's work focuses on the social issues of African Americans. His signature style was to choreograph dances fusing a combination of modern, ballet, and jazz techniques.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Associate Artistic Director Matthew Rushing brought Civil Rights Era activism to life through movement in *ODETTA*. Set to the musical genius of **Odetta Holmes**, Rushing choreographed the work to pay tribute to Odetta's musical range of folk, gospel, and blues music. Odetta's influenced the world using her magical voice for change. **Rushing** choreographed *ODETTA* for the Ailey company in 2014. Dallas Black Dance Theatre was the first dance company to perform *ODETTA* outside of *Ailey* in 2019.

CULTURAL AWARENESS PERFORMANCE DETAILS

Saturday, February 20, 2021

Virtual Performance starts at 7:00 pm CST/ 8:00 pm EST \$30 per household

Group tickets are also available.

Details at www.DBDT.com

2020-2021 | DBDT Season Sponsors

Legacy Sponsor: Simmons Sisters Fund at Texas Women's Foundation

Season Sponsors: Office of Arts and Culture – City of Dallas, Texas Instruments, NBC 5, Texas Metro News, The Dallas Morning News, NorthPark Center, TACA, American Airlines, The Shubert Foundation Inc., DART, and The Dallas Weekly.

2020 – 2021 | DBDT Season Supporters

Texas Commission on the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, Lexus, Elite News, FYI-50+, The Dallas Examiner, The Dallas Post Tribune, Oversee My IT, Trendy Africa, and Arts+Culture.

2020-2021 | DBDT COVID Resilience Sponsors

Anonymous, LKS Foundation, Mid-America Arts Alliance United States Regional Arts Resilience Fund, Office of Arts and Culture – City of Dallas Coronavirus Relief Fund, National Endowment for the Arts CARES Act, Oversee My IT, Dallas Black Dance Theatre Board of Directors, Henry C. Beck, Jr. Donor Advised Fund at Texas Women's Foundation, Kate Wilson Davis Fund at Texas Women's Foundation, The Eugene McDermott Foundation, PNC, Wells Fargo, Anonymous, Communities Foundation of Texas/North Texas Giving Day, Chase, Deedie Rose, TACA Emergency Arts Relief Fund, Sally Pian & Ira Silverman, Lucy and Henry Billingsley Fund at Texas Women's Foundation, Ford Reynolds Fund of the Southwest Community Foundation, Keron Wright.

ABOUT DALLAS BLACK DANCE THEATRE: *Dallas Black Dance Theatre (DBDT) is an internationally recognized professional dance company that engages the cross-cultural community through contemporary modern dance presented from the African American experience. The National Endowment for the Arts designated the 44-year-old company as an American Masterpiece Touring Artist in 2008. The company also received the Texas Medal of Arts Award for Arts Education in 2017. As Dallas' oldest and largest professional dance company, DBDT ranks as the 10th largest minority arts organization in America and the fourth largest black dance company in the nation.*

Ann Williams founded Dallas Black Dance Theatre in 1976. **Melissa M. Young** took over the helm as Artistic Director in 2018 after starting with the company as a dancer in 1994. **Zenetta S. Drew** has led the administrative side of the company since 1987 as Executive Director.

The mission of Dallas Black Dance Theatre is to create and produce contemporary modern dance at its highest level of artistic excellence through performances and educational programs that bridge cultures and reach diverse communities. The virtuosic dancers of Dallas Black Dance Theatre have mesmerized 4.3 million arts patrons across 16 countries, including two Olympic Cultural events.

Five performing companies comprise Dallas Black Dance Theatre and its training Academy. DBDT consists of 13 full-time salaried dancers performing a mixed repertory of modern, jazz, African, and spiritual works by national and international choreographers. DBDT: Encore! features eight artists of rising excellence from across the nation who support DBDT's growing local and regional educational outreach. 2.7 million students, grades K-12, have experienced the dance company's performances and educational outreach programs.

Dallas Black Dance Academy, the official school of Dallas Black Dance Theatre, celebrates 47 years of delivering dance instruction to a community of diverse backgrounds. The academy was the first in the nation to train a student who received the Presidential Scholar Award in Dance in 1980. More than 500 students participate weekly in 50 dance classes, which include ballet, jazz, tap, modern, and African. Classes are

held at DBDT's studios and are open to students ages four to adult. The academy has three performing ensembles: **Allegro Performing Ensemble**, DBDT's premier academy ensemble, **Senior Performing Ensemble**, and **Junior Performing Ensemble**.

Dallas Black Dance Theatre's primary home in the historic Moorland YMCA building in the Dallas Arts District includes dance studios, training facilities, and administrative offices. Dallas Black Dance Theatre is a resident company of the **AT&T Performing Arts Center** and its performance home is the **Dee and Charles Wily Theatre**.

For more details, visit www.DBDT.com and www.DBDT.com/academy.



Photograph of ODETTA by Amitava Sarkar.



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