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**International Association of Blacks in Dance
Receives National Medal of Arts Award**

*Dallas Black Dance Theatre Founder Ann Williams
Attends White House Ceremony As a Founding Member of IABD*

Dallas, TX - **President Joseph R. Biden** presented the **International Association of Blacks in Dance (IABD)** with the **National Medal of Arts**, along with eleven other renowned artists and arts organizations. IABD President and CEO **Denise Saunders Thompson** accepted the award on March 21, 2023, during a ceremony in the East Room of The White House. **Dallas Black Dance Theatre (DBDT)** founder **Ann M. Williams** attended the ceremony as a founding member of IABD, along with representatives of the four other founding organizations; **Joan Myers Brown**, founder of **The Philadelphia Dance Company, Philadanco!**, **Cleo Parker Robinson**, founder of **Cleo Parker Robinson Dance**, **Lula Washington**, founder of **Lula Washington Dance Theatre** and **Debbie Blunden-Diggs**, Artistic Director of **Dayton Contemporary Dance Company**.

The National Medal of Arts is the highest award the federal government gives to artists and arts patrons. The President of the United States awards it to individuals or groups who deserve special recognition by reason of their outstanding contributions to the excellence, growth, support, and availability of the arts in the United States. Others receiving the award were **Judith Francisca Baca**, **Fred Eychaner**, **Jose Feliciano**, **Mindy Kaling**, **Gladys Knight**, **Julia Louis-Dreyfus**, **Antonio Martorell-Cardona**, **Joan Shigekawa**, **Bruce Springsteen**, **Vera Wang**, and **The Billie Holiday Theatre**.

In presenting the award, President Biden said the “International Association of Blacks in Dance is driven by the mission to preserve dance by the African diaspora for future generations.” The White House press release noted that “**through teaching, training, and performance, the International Association of Blacks in Dance promotes dance by people of African ancestry and origin, explores and exchanges art, spans cultures and generations, and enriches the dance culture of America.**”

The 35-year-old IABD preserves and promotes dance by people of African ancestry or origin and assists and increases opportunities for artists in networking, funding,

performances, education, audience development, philosophical dialogue, touring, and advocacy. The Association is committed to documenting and addressing Black aesthetics in dance. It educates younger generations about the contributions of Black artists in dance through the annual International Conference and Festival of Blacks in Dance providing dance workshops and sessions on the business of dance. For the past 33 years, the event has been held nationwide and in Canada attracting dance professionals, donors, foundations, and corporations from Europe, South America, Africa, Australia, and the Caribbean.

Dallas Black Dance Theatre has hosted the Conference and Festival eight times to help sustain the cultural legacy of Black dance for our nation. Now in its 46th season, DBDT is the ninth largest contemporary modern dance company in the country, according to Dance Data Project, and the oldest and largest dance company in Dallas. DBDT was a trailblazer when COVID shut down performance venues in 2020, launching the first all-virtual season. Dallas Black Dance Theatre still offers its patrons three ways to view performances providing in-person, streaming, and on-demand options.

For more details on Dallas Black Dance Theatre, visit www.DBDT.com.

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ABOUT DALLAS BLACK DANCE THEATRE

Ann Williams founded Dallas Black Dance Theatre in 1976. The dance company is now under the direction of Artistic Director **Melissa M. Young**. Dallas Black Dance Theatre's mission is to create and produce contemporary modern dance at the highest level of artistic excellence through performances and educational programs that bridge cultures and reach diverse communities. As the largest and oldest professional dance company in Dallas, DBDT is the fourth-largest Black dance company in the nation, the ninth-largest contemporary modern dance company, and ranked 40th among the nation's leading ballet companies. Located in the thriving downtown **Dallas Arts District**, DBDT has performed

worldwide for over 4.5 million arts patrons and 2.7 million students in 32 states and 16 countries on five continents. The performances include two Olympics (1996 & 2012), the nation's most prestigious venues (**Lincoln Center, Kennedy Center, Broadway, Jacob's Pillow**), and for such luminaries as **Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II** and **South African President Nelson Mandela**. Since the pandemic began in 2020, DBDT performances have also been viewed virtually in 34 countries and 38 states. The Company has been recognized by the **National Endowment for the Arts** as an **American Masterpiece Touring Artist** (2008) and received the **Texas Medal of the Arts Award** for Arts Education (2017). For details on Dallas Black Dance Theatre, visit www.DBDT.com.



l-r: Lula Washington, Joan Myers Brown, Ann M. Williams, Cleo Parker Robinson, and Debbie Blunden-Diggs.



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