

DANCE THEATRE *of* HARLEM

For immediate release

Dance Theatre of Harlem Galvanizes Arts Community with Inaugural Artistic Council

Derrick Adams, Sanford Biggers, Virginia Johnson, Fatima Robinson, Marcus Samuelsson, and Mickalene Thomas named to founding cohort



(New York, NY, August 11, 2026) — **Dance Theatre of Harlem (DTH)** today announced the members of its first-ever Artistic Council, a new brain trust of artists and creative leaders assembled to sharpen the company’s vision, extend its reach, and champion its work across the culture at large. The founding cohort brings together six of the most influential names spanning dance, visual art, and the culinary world: Derrick Adams, Sanford Biggers, Virginia Johnson, Fatima Robinson, Marcus Samuelsson, and Mickalene Thomas. The Council continues Dance

Theatre of Harlem's legacy of drawing on extraordinary artists and cultural leaders as thought partners, a lineage that includes Cicely Tyson, Jessye Norman, and Ben Vereen.

"Dance Theatre of Harlem has always been at its strongest when artists are in the room, shaping what comes next. This Artistic Council reflects that belief. Derrick, Sanford, Virginia, Fatima, Marcus, and Mickalene each bring a distinct lens on culture and creativity, and their willingness to lend that perspective to our future says something powerful about where this company is headed. We are honored to have them with us." — **Anna Glass, Executive Director, Dance Theatre of Harlem**

The announcement comes as Dance Theatre of Harlem heads to Martha's Vineyard for a private gathering, where Artistic Council member Mickalene Thomas will join DTH Artistic Director **Robert Garland** for a live conversation, offering an early glimpse of the kind of dialogue and cross-disciplinary exchange the Council is designed to spark. The conversation will be moderated by DTH Board Member Leslie Wims Morris. The news also follows Fatima Robinson's recognition with the Arthur Mitchell Vision Award at DTH's annual gala this past April, a fitting precursor to a Council built on exactly that kind of vision: artists building bridges across disciplines to help carry the company's work forward.

"This Council is exactly why we did this work, to keep the dialogue between disciplines alive and active, not just symbolic. Derrick, Sanford, Virginia, Fatima, Marcus, and Mickalene each carry a different way of seeing the world, and that range is the point. When artists like this are actually in the room, shaping what we do next, it changes the kind of company we can become." — **Robert Garland, Artistic Director, Dance Theatre of Harlem**

The Artistic Council is a creative sounding board, a circle of collaborators lending their expertise, platforms, and perspective to help shape Dance Theatre of Harlem's programming, deepen its ties to the artistic community, and put the company's legacy in front of new audiences.

Meet the Inaugural Artistic Council:



Virginia Johnson is a trailblazing former ballerina who helped build DTH from its founding in 1969 alongside Arthur Mitchell, later returning as the company's Artistic Director, where she revived its touring company and steered its legacy through the pandemic. A Dance Magazine Award and Bessie Lifetime Achievement Award recipient,

she now serves as a Visiting Scholar at NYU's Center for Ballet and the Arts. She also holds an honorary doctorate from The Juilliard School.



Derrick Adams is a Brooklyn-based multidisciplinary artist whose work celebrating Black life and culture lives in the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney, and the Studio Museum in Harlem. Adams opened his mid-career survey at ICA Boston in 2026 and is a tenured professor at CUNY Brooklyn College.



Marcus Samuelsson is the James Beard Award-winning chef and restaurateur behind Harlem's iconic Red Rooster, and the youngest chef ever awarded three stars by The New York Times. An Emmy winner and bestselling author, Samuelsson was the guest chef for President Obama's first state dinner.



Fatima Robinson is one of the most sought-after choreographers and creative directors in entertainment, recently serving as Director of Choreography for Beyoncé's Renaissance World Tour. Hailed by The New York Times as "the most elevated hip-hop and R&B choreographer working today," her credits span Dreamgirls, the Super Bowl Halftime Show, and the Oscars.



Sanford Biggers is a Los Angeles-born, New York-based multidisciplinary artist whose work reimagines overlooked aesthetic, cultural, and political narratives through antique quilts, classical sculpture, sound, and video. His work has been exhibited at the Tate

Modern, the Studio Museum in Harlem, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Brooklyn Museum, and is held in the permanent collections of MoMA, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Guggenheim, among others. A Guggenheim Fellow and recipient of the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award and the 2017 Rome Prize, Biggers is also a GRAMMY winner for his contribution to Meshell Ndegeocello's The Omnichord Real Book, named 2024 Best Alternative Jazz Album.



Mickalene Thomas is a globally celebrated multidisciplinary artist renowned for her vibrant, rhinestone-adorned portraits that reimagine the representation of Black women in contemporary art, with work held in the permanent collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, MoMA, the Whitney, and the Smithsonian. Beyond her studio practice, she is a curator, mentor, and Tony-nominated co-producer who actively supports emerging artists, particularly women, LGBTQ+ creatives, and artists of color. In 2023, she made history as the first Black queer femme artist to have a scholarship endowed in her name at Yale, her alma mater. Her influence deepened further in 2025, when she was named one of TIME100's Most Influential People and became the first African-American artist honored with a major solo show at the Grand Palais in Paris. Most recently in 2026, Thomas received a Clio Award and CPW Photographer of the Year, adding to past honors including the Gordon Parks Foundation Honorary Award and the Creative Capital Award, and was named Honorary Co-Chair of Dance Theatre of Harlem.

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ABOUT DANCE THEATRE OF HARLEM: Dance Theatre of Harlem is a leading dance institution of unparalleled global acclaim, encompassing a world class company, a professional studio school, a leading arts education program - Dancing Through Barriers®, and community engagement activities. Each component of Dance Theatre of Harlem carries a solid commitment towards enriching the lives of young people and adults around the world through the arts. Founded in 1969 by Arthur Mitchell and Karel Shook, Dance Theatre of Harlem was considered “one of ballet’s most exciting undertakings” (The New York Times, 1971). Shortly after the assassination of The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Mitchell was inspired to start a school that would offer children — especially those in Harlem, the community in which he was born — the opportunity to learn about dance and the allied arts. Now in its **sixth** decade, Dance Theatre of Harlem has grown into a multi-cultural dance institution with an extraordinary legacy of providing opportunities for creative expression and artistic excellence that continues to set standards in the performing arts.

Follow Dance Theatre of Harlem on Instagram and Facebook:
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