



## **Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of U.S. State Department and Brooklyn Academy of Music announce *DanceMotion USA<sup>sm</sup>* initiative featuring American dance companies in international performance and cultural exchange**

### **Urban Bush Women; ODC/Dance; and Evidence, A Dance Company to tour in 2010**

**Brooklyn, NY/April 29, 2009**—The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State and Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) are proud to announce *DanceMotion USA<sup>sm</sup>*, a unique program dedicated to sharing the story of American dance with international audiences. Conceived and funded by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and produced by BAM—with supplementary educational support by Pfizer—*DanceMotion USA<sup>sm</sup>* invites three American companies to share our rich dance culture in separate performance tours in 2010.

The representative companies invited to participate in the inaugural *DanceMotion USA<sup>sm</sup>* program are Evidence, A Dance Company (based in Brooklyn, NY); ODC/Dance (based in San Francisco, CA); and Urban Bush Women (also Brooklyn-based). Each company will make a four-week tour of one region during the period of January–April, 2010: Evidence will tour Africa (South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal), ODC/Dance will tour to the East Asian and Pacific region (Thailand, Burma, Indonesia), and Urban Bush Women will tour South America (Brazil, Venezuela, and Colombia). The companies’ activities will include vital outreach, including workshops, master classes, media interviews, and discussions with local artists and foreign audiences. The selected companies are working with organizers at *DanceMotion USA<sup>sm</sup>* to develop informative materials to lay the groundwork for fruitful exchange and ensure the effectiveness of this exciting program.

Alina L. Romanowski, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Professional and Cultural Exchanges at the U.S. Department of State said, “President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton have emphasized the need for the United States to use ‘smart power’ in foreign affairs. Cultural exchanges, such as *DanceMotion USA<sup>sm</sup>*, present America in a way that is accessible to everyone and demonstrate the United States’ commitment to exemplifying American culture and values as we reach out to audiences around the world.”

Karen Brooks Hopkins, BAM President remarked, “BAM is honored to have been selected by the U.S. Department of State as the sole grantee and producer—among many applicants nationwide—for this unique and valuable new program. We also appreciate the support of Pfizer for the program’s vital educational efforts.”



**BAM**

Joseph V. Melillo, BAM Executive Producer, said, “As a presenter of international and American dance, music, theater, and film in the United States, BAM’s mission has always been one of cultural education and enlightenment through the arts. The opportunity to work with the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs in shaping the inaugural *DanceMotion USA<sup>sm</sup>* program has enabled us to think more broadly about sharing our nation’s rich dance culture with communities worldwide. We are grateful to be able to partner with the U.S. Department of State in this exciting endeavor.”

“Pfizer is proud to support *DanceMotion USA<sup>sm</sup>*,” said Amy W. Schulman, senior vice president and general counsel of Pfizer, and also a BAM board member. “This exciting cultural exchange program presents a unique opportunity to introduce communities in nine countries to the benefits of contemporary American dance. We are particularly pleased to join forces with both the public sector and BAM—a renowned non-profit arts center—in a venture that will help communities engage in dance as both an art form and a healthy physical activity.”

*DanceMotion USA<sup>sm</sup>* is modeled on the U.S. State Department’s successful music-based cultural exchange program, *The Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad*—administered by Jazz at Lincoln Center—which disseminates American roots music around the world. Since its inception in 2005, *The Rhythm Road* has sent outstanding performers of jazz, blues, bluegrass, and hip-hop to more than 90 countries on five continents.

As is the case with *The Rhythm Road* program, education and community engagement are vital components of the *DanceMotion USA<sup>sm</sup>* program—and are therefore central to the mission of the participating dance companies. Tour venues in each region will choose from a wide variety of residency activities such as master classes for students or professionals, workshops for young people and for non-dancers, inter-generational workshops, choreography labs, lecture-demonstrations, pre- and post-performance discussions, open rehearsals, and workshops on building community through the arts. An array of educational and multimedia resources will be available at [www.DanceMotion.org](http://www.DanceMotion.org), providing information about the companies, historical and contextual materials on contemporary American dance, bibliographies, and other materials. In addition, *DanceMotion USA<sup>sm</sup>* will provide books, DVDs, and other educational materials to libraries in each country.

For general management of the *DanceMotion USA<sup>sm</sup>* project, BAM has enlisted the support of Lisa Booth Management, Inc. (LMBI), a performing arts firm specializing in producing and managing contemporary performance. LMBI is providing administrative and logistical support for the planning phase of the project, and will help implement the international tours and assist in the program’s reporting and evaluation phases.

### About the *DanceMotion USA<sup>sm</sup>* Companies

Renowned Brooklyn-based **Evidence, A Dance Company** was founded by choreographer **Ronald K. Brown** in 1985. The company’s mission is to promote understanding of the human experience in the African Diaspora through dance and storytelling and to provide sensory connections to history and tradition through music, movement, and spoken word. Brown uses movement as a way to reinforce the importance of community in African American culture. Evidence tours to some 30 communities in the United States annually. The company has also traveled overseas to Cuba, Brazil, England, France, Greece, Hungary, Mexico, and Senegal to perform, teach master classes, and conduct lectures and demonstrations for young people, reaching more than 30,000 people annually. Evidence will perform at BAM in the 2009 DanceAfrica festival from May 22–25, 2009.

Praised by The New York Times as “one of the most profound choreographers of his modern dance generation,” Ronald K. Brown has created works for his company as well as for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, Cinque Folkloric Dance Theater, and Jeune Ballet d’Afrique Noire, among others. He has received numerous awards and fellowships including a Guggenheim Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Arts Choreographer’s Fellowship, a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship, New York Dance and Performance Award (Bessie), among many others. In 2003, Ron received an AUDELCO (Black Theater

Award) for his choreography for *Crowns: Portraits of Black Women in Church Hats*, originally produced by the McCarter Theater and presented off-Broadway. In fall 2006 Brown received the inaugural United States Artists Rose Fellowship. He is an advocate for the growth of dance and is instrumental in encouraging young dancers to choreograph and develop careers in dance. Please visit [www.evidencedance.com](http://www.evidencedance.com).

**ODC/Dance** is known throughout the world for its athleticism, passion and intellectual depth. The Company's three resident choreographers—Brenda Way, KT Nelson, and Kimi Okada—are considered among America's important contemporary choreographers and have created a dynamic movement vocabulary that has significantly influenced dancers and choreographers alike. In 38 years, ODC/Dance has performed for more than a million people in 32 states and 11 countries.

Founded in 1971 by Artistic Director **Brenda Way**, who trained under George Balanchine, ODC (Oberlin Dance Collective—named after its place of origin, Oberlin College in Ohio) loaded up a yellow school bus and relocated to San Francisco in 1976. Her goal was to ground the company in a dynamic, pluralistic setting. ODC was the first modern dance company in America to build its own home facility in 1979, from which it operates the ODC School, the ODC Theater, and the ODC Gallery. In September 2005, ODC opened a second performing arts facility, the ODC Dance Commons. Through various programs ODC strives to inspire audiences, cultivate artists, engage community, and foster diversity and inclusion through dance performance, training, and mentorship.

Brenda Way, Artistic Director, received her early training at The School of American Ballet and Ballet Arts in New York City. She is the Founder and Artistic Director of ODC Dance and creator of the ODC Theater and ODC Dance Commons, a community performance venue and training facility in San Francisco's Mission District. She has choreographed some 76 works including commissioned pieces: *Unintended Consequences: A Meditation* (2008, Equal Justice Society); *Life is a House* (2008, San Francisco Girls Chorus); *On a Train Heading South* (2005, CSU Monterey Bay); *Remnants of Song* (2002, Stanford Lively Arts); *Scissors Paper Stone* (1994, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater); *Western Women* (1993, Cal Performances, Rutgers University, and Jacob's Pillow); *Ghosts of an Old Ceremony* (1991, Walker Art Center and The Minnesota Orchestra); *Krazy Kat* (1990, San Francisco Ballet); *This Point in Time* (1987, Oakland Ballet); *Tamina* (1986, San Francisco Performances); and *Invisible Cities* (1985, Stanford Lively Arts and the Robotics Research Laboratory).

Among Way's many artistic collaborators are Bobby McFerrin, Eleanor Coppola, Wayne Thiebaud, Hiraki Sawa, Jim Campbell, Patti Dobrowolski, and Paul Dresner.

Way is a national spokesperson for dance, has published widely, and has received numerous awards and 30 years of support from the National Endowment for the Arts. She is a 2000 recipient of the John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship and is currently serving as a Resident of the Arts at the American Academy in Rome. Way holds a PhD in aesthetics and is the mother of four children.

Please visit [www.ODCDance.org](http://www.ODCDance.org)

Brooklyn-based **Urban Bush Women (UBW)** is an acclaimed performance ensemble founded in 1984 by choreographer **Jawole Willa Jo Zollar** to explore the use of cultural expression as a catalyst for social change. UBW weaves contemporary dance with music and text to illuminate the history, culture, and spiritual traditions of African Americans and the African Diaspora. Drawing strength and solidarity from each other, this all-women troupe celebrates their African roots while expanding their horizons beyond their own perspectives. Performances by Urban Bush Women are electric and inspiring. Ms. Zollar's insightful choreography communicates with tremendous strength and power.

UBW tours extensively and has collaborated with artists from every field including jazz artist David Murray, poets Laurie Carlos and Carl Hancock Rux, directors Steve Kent and Elizabeth Herron, the National Song and

Dance Company of Mozambique, and most recently with Germaine Acogny's acclaimed Compagnie Jant-Bi from Senegal during the 2008 Next Wave Festival at BAM.

UBW engages in extensive community-based programming, encouraging cultural activity as an inherent part of community life. The company partners with local presenters, area artists, and community residents to bring the untold and under-told histories of their communities forward through performance.

Jawole Willa Jo Zollar founded UBW in 1984 after studying with dance greats Joseph Stevenson, Katherine Dunham, and Dianne McIntyre. She holds a BA in dance from the University of Missouri at Kansas City and an MFA in dance from Florida State University. In addition to 32 works for UBW, Zollar has created choreography for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Ballet Arizona, Philadanco, University of Maryland, University of Florida, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, and others. She is the Nancy Smith Fichter tenured professor in the Dance Department of Florida State University and holds an honorary doctorate from Columbia College in Chicago. The recipient of many prestigious awards and recognitions, she was named a United States Artists Wynn Fellow in 2008 and was awarded a 2009 Guggenheim Fellowship. Please visit [www.UrbanBushWomen.org](http://www.UrbanBushWomen.org).

#### About BAM

Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) is recognized internationally for its innovative programming of dance, music, theater, music-theater, opera, and film. BAM presents leading national and international artists and companies in its annual Spring Season and highlights groundbreaking, contemporary work in the performing arts with its Next Wave Festival each fall. Founded in 1983, the Next Wave is one of the world's most important festivals of contemporary performing arts. BAM Rose Cinemas features new, independent film releases and BAMcinématek—a curated, daily repertory film program.

BAM also serves New York City's diverse population through a weekend concert series in BAMcafé, community events, literary series, and a wide variety of educational programs. BAM, America's oldest performing arts center in continuous operation, has presented performances since 1861 and attracts an audience of more than 500,000 people each year. The institution is led by President Karen Brooks Hopkins and Executive Producer Joseph V. Melillo—each of whom has been associated with BAM for more than 25 years.

#### About Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State fosters mutual understanding between the people of the United States and people around the world through a range of international exchanges and activities, including the prestigious Fulbright Program and the International Visitor Leadership Program. Numbering over one million people worldwide, ECA exchange program alumni include more than 300 current and former heads of state and government.

The ECA Cultural Programs Division supports a variety of cultural exchange programs that further U.S. foreign policy, highlight America's artistic excellence, and foster mutual understanding and respect for other cultures and traditions, by sharing the rich artistic traditions of the United States with foreign audiences. Cultural diplomacy transcends borders, languages and generations, demonstrates our common humanity, and promotes appreciation of other cultures as it conveys the unique spirit and values of America. Please visit <http://exchanges.state.gov/cultural/index.html>.

#### Credits:

Education Sponsor for *DanceMotion USA<sup>sm</sup>*: Pfizer

For press information, contact: Sandy Sawotka, phone 718.636.4129 x2 or [ssawotka@bam.org](mailto:ssawotka@bam.org)