

ALONZO KING'S LINES BALLET



Alonzo King with Meredith Webster, Photo: Marty Sohl

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Alonzo King Receives National Honor: One of the Fifty United States Artists Fellowships

San Francisco Brings Home Three Awards for Outstanding Artists

In the first year that the new USA Fellowships were given to 50 living artists, Alonzo King has been awarded the only Fellowship for Dance in California. In fact, he is the only award-winner in Dance who is not based in New York, where the other three Fellows in Dance—Ronald K. Brown, Eiko and Koma, and Ralph Lemon—live and work. In California, Alonzo King is one of only 12 working artists to be honored for achievements in artistic excellence. San Francisco is distinguished by 3 award-winning resident artists: in addition to choreographer Alonzo King, USA Fellowships were also given to independent filmmaker George Kuchar in Media, and to contemporary performer Marc Bamuthi Joseph in Theater Arts. The USA Prudential Fellowship given to Alonzo King includes an unrestricted grant of \$50,000, intended to directly support his creative work as a choreographer and Artistic Director of LINES Ballet.

“When I observe the world, it seems that everything is dancing,” Alonzo King says, “fixed stars that have shimmered in place for eons through gravity’s magnetic pull; the human being, striving to maintain poise against obstacles... When you spend a life creating, at some point you begin to realize that you are actually discovering.” Describing his ideas for the future, Alonzo King offers an inspiring goal: “that the work will become more luminous and look less and less like choreography. That it will be an example of conscious living, and will serve as a reminder of what we are, and how life can be lived.”

With an estimated 2 million artists in America, the United States Artists Fellowships aims “to fuel innovation in our culture by investing in creativity at its source: our nation’s finest artists,” said Susan V. Berresford, USA Board Chair and president of the Ford Foundation. The organization, founded last year, was created to support outstanding individual artists in a time when public funding for the arts has become more and more scarce. Artists do not apply for the Fellowships directly, but are nominated by experts who consider candidates from a broad array of disciplines—architecture, design, crafts, traditional arts, dance, literature, film, radio, video, music, theater arts, and visual arts such as painting and sculpture—at different stages of their careers, from emerging artists to those already recognized as masters in their fields, from 43 states in the US. Once artists have been nominated, panels select 50 individuals from the 300 nominees as recipients of USA Fellowships. The USA Board of Directors includes actor Danny Glover, who collaborated with Alonzo King’s LINES Ballet on “Before the Blues,” which premiered in 2004.

In commending the merits of Alonzo King's work, the USA Board of Directors praised his creative integration of forms, as he "works with and beyond the traditions and vocabulary of classical ballet. Drawing on influences from African and jazz dance, and working with a wide variety of world music forms, he favors unrelenting movement in which "lines" form and dissolve rapidly, seamlessly, and—so it would appear—effortlessly." The USA Board concluded by recognizing Alonzo King's vision of ballet as a deeply relevant expression of human experience, stating that "with each new dance, he challenges himself and his dancers to re-imagine ballet as a vehicle for exploring universal themes such as the nature of the spirit and the divine." The USA Fellowship is the second major national award Alonzo King has received in the past two years—in 2005, he won the Bessie Award for Choreographer/Creator—and one of many such honors he has received over the course of his career. He is also the recipient of the NEA Choreographer's Fellowship, Irvine Fellowship in Dance, National Dance Project and the National Dance Residency Program, as well as five Isadora Duncan Awards. His choreography has been commissioned for the repertoires of companies throughout the world, including the Royal Swedish Ballet, Joffrey Ballet, Frankfurt Ballet, Dance Theater of Harlem, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, Hong Kong Ballet, North Carolina Dance Theatre, and Washington Ballet. In Fall 2007, Alonzo King's LINES Ballet will celebrate its 25th anniversary.

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