

## The Dance Magazine Awards Celebrate Everything We Love About Dance

By: Jennifer Stahl

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What a night. The Dance Magazine Awards yesterday at the Ailey Citigroup Theater was jam-packed with love for dance.

From legendary icons to early-career choreographers we can't stop obsessing over, the Dance Magazine Awards, presented by the Dance Media Foundation, recognized a wide spectrum of our field.

And with more performances than ever before, the night was an incredible celebration of the dance community. As host Wendy Perron pointed out, in many ways, we doubled the usual fun this year: Some honorees had two performances, some had two presenters, and David Gordon and Valda Setterfield were themselves, well, two awardees.

The performance started off with the grand, opulent dancing of Sara Mearns in George Balanchine's *Walpurgisnacht* Ballet, which was amazing to witness up-close in the intimate black box theater. As presenter Jodi Melnick put it, Mearns is known for her fierce, abundant beauty in ballet. Presenter Marc Happel, director of costumes at New York City Ballet, shared that even in rehearsal when many dancers are marking, Mearns gives 110 percent, making it feel like an opening night.

But we also got to see the new side of Mearns, as her curiosity has led her to investigate other dance forms. In *Harp Etude*, choreographed by Lori Belilove after Isadora Duncan, Mearns showcased an earthy, flowing musicality. As soon as she finished, pianist Cameron Grant, who accompanied her live onstage, was the first to shout, "Bravo."

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**We witnessed the Ailey company's incredible appreciation for Masazumi Chaya**

**Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater pulled out its all-star team to celebrate associate artistic director Masazumi Chaya.**

**The fierce Jacqueline Green and the ever-compelling Jamar Roberts performed Judith Jamison's *A Case of You*, followed by Clifton Brown in Alvin Ailey's virtuosic *Pas De Duke*.**



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**Both artistic director emerita Judith Jamison and current artistic director Robert Battle took the stage to present to Chaya. Jamison recalled not only Chaya's own energetic dancing, but how he used to sit in the wings and watch her almost every time she performed *Cry*. And how, when the company was struggling with finances early in her directorship and they didn't have the funds to pay the dancers one week, Chaya told her, "I'll pay them."**

**Battle recounted how Chaya's secret sauce was his love for the company and for Alvin Ailey—and the fact that Chaya has never stopped dancing. Even today, when a new choreographer comes in, Chaya's on the floor, learning the steps alongside the dancers.**

**In his acceptance, Chaya spoke about his personal relationship with Dance Magazine, from the time he first picked up a copy in the late '60s when he was invited to perform in the United States to how he ended up on a cover in 1994, shot by Jack Mitchell. And he admitted that when he got the call this year that we wanted to present him with a Dance Magazine Award, all he could say repeatedly was, "Oh my god, I cannot believe it. Thank you!"**

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Read full article [here](#).