



PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT

Lacey Althouse—lalthouse@dancenyc.org, (212) 966-4452

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Dance Community Celebrates its Contributions to New York City



Isaac Mizrahi and Lucy Sexton, Photographed by Christopher Duggan/Nel Shelby Productions

New York—On Monday, October 18 at Symphony Space, Dance/NYC presented its first New York Dance and Performance Awards (the Bessie Awards). The sold-out evening included a VIP cocktail reception and a *free* awards ceremony recognizing six dance productions from the 08-09 season, six productions from the 09-10 season and performers from a mix of the past two seasons. This is the first awards ceremony after a two-year hiatus, and the awards are being restructured by Dance/NYC and the Bessie Steering Committee in the year ahead.

“This is an important moment for dance service to take the stage,” said Lane Harwell, who was named Director of Dance/NYC in September. “The mission of Dance/NYC, to strengthen professional dance, is achieved tonight through a celebration of dance and its contributions to the City and its creative life. Tonight we are a community over 700 strong—dance artists, managers, policymakers and audiences—uniting as advocates for culture. Our challenge and opportunity are to unite in advocacy every day.”

“For me, the most exciting aspect of this transition time for the Bessie Awards has been talking with an ever widening circle of people,” said Lucy Sexton, the independent producer of the Bessies. “From the Bessie Steering Committee and the Bessie Selection Committee to roundtable discussions held with a wide range of dance artists this summer,” she went on, “so many people came up with such brilliant solutions and new ideas for how to structure the award categories and the voting. I’m very excited to keep talking and keep the Bessies and dance in New York happening far into the future.”

The Bessie Steering Committee, responsible for setting policy and shepherding the awards, includes Judy Hussie-Taylor, Carla Peterson, Mikki Sheperd, Andrea Sholler, Elizabeth Streb, Martin Wechsler and Reggie Wilson.

The event was **hosted by Isaac Mizrahi** and awards were **presented by** leaders and legends in dance: HT Chen, Ishmael Houston-Jones, Virginia Johnson, Yvonne Rainer, Tina Ramirez, Gus Solomons Jr., Jock Soto, Elizabeth Streb and Jennifer Tipton.

Production awards went to *837 Venice Boulevard*, Faye Driscoll; *Be in the Gray With Me*, Pam Tanowitz; *Crotch (all the Joseph Beuys references in the world cannot heal the pain, confusion, regret, cruelty, betrayal or trauma . . .)*, Keith Hennessy; *Dark Horse/Black Forest*, Yanira Castro; *Pent-Up: A Revenge Dance*, Okwui Okpokwasilli; *Stolen*, Yvonne Meier; *Comme Toujours, Here I Stand*, Annie-B Parson; *Grupo de Rua*, Bruno Beltrao; *Last Meadow*, Miguel Gutierrez; *parades & changes, replays*, Anne Collod, Anna Halprin, Morton Subotnick; *Puro Deseo*, Luciana Achugar; *The Radio Show*, Kyle Abraham. **Performer awards** went to Michelle Boule, David Leventhal, Heather Olson, Miki Orihara, Gus Solomons Jr., Carmen deLavallade, Dudley Williams, Valda Setterfield, Michael Blake, Hope Clark, Keith Sabado, Kayvon Pourazar, Latysha Antonio, Sofia Britos, Non Griffiths and Allegra Herman.

The evening was made possible by **major support** from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Mertz Gilmore Foundation and individual donors. Sponsors included Nel Shelby Productions, SKY/NOVA, D'Agostino, Touton and Two Boots Pizza.

Nel Shelby Production's video of the VIP party and ceremony is available online at <http://www.youtube.com/user/nelshelbyproductions?feature=mhum>

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