

# thewashingtonballet

## The Washington Ballet Appoints Edwaard Liang as its New Artistic Director

*The dynamic arts leader brings an unparalleled depth of experience and a commitment to shaping the future of ballet in the nation's capital and beyond*

**Washington, D.C. (October 24, 2023)** — [The Washington Ballet](#) (TWB) today announced that American arts leader **Edwaard Liang** has been appointed its new Artistic Director. The internationally renowned dancer, choreographer and administrator becomes only the fourth artistic director in the company's history and the first person of color to head the organization.

"Edwaard is a proven, visionary leader and deeply gifted artist who is uniquely prepared to nurture all aspects of The Washington Ballet — our world-class artists, our school and training programs, and the communities we serve," stated **Jean-Marie Fernandez**, chair of The Washington Ballet's Board of Directors. "Edwaard's commitment to shaping the future of ballet perfectly aligns with our ambitions as a dynamic, diverse mid-sized ballet company with an outsized impact in our community and in the ballet world."

**Edwaard Liang** stated: "The Washington Ballet is a remarkable organization that I've felt drawn to since I first worked with the company in 2008. We share the same values: a commitment to world-class dance; a powerful drive to program dance that can respond to the needs of many diverse and varied communities; and a genuine desire to evolve the art form thoughtfully. What an exceptional honor and opportunity to live, work, and lead the future of ballet in our nation's capital."

As an international choreographer of note, the 48-year-old is well known to Washington Ballet dancers and audiences, having choreographed five works for the Company between 2008 and 2016: *Out of Time* (2008); *Wunderland* (2009), *As Above, So Below* (2011), *La Ofrenda* ("The Offering," 2012), and "Dancing in the Street," part of the *Bowie & Queen* program collaboration with Trey McIntyre (2016).

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Born in Taiwan and raised in California, Liang began his professional career with **New York City Ballet** and later, at the invitation of Jiří Kylián, danced with **Nederlands Dans Theater**, where he discovered his passion for choreography. In the past 20 years, his works have been performed by dance companies worldwide, including New York City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Bolshoi Ballet, Joffrey Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, and Shanghai Ballet, among others. He has won numerous awards, including an Emmy® Award for the short dance film “Vaulted” (2018).

Currently completing his eleventh and final season as Artistic Director of [BalletMet](#) (Columbus, Ohio), Liang is credited with reinvigorating the organization through his collegiality, creativity and authentic commitment to community building. During his tenure, BalletMet nearly doubled in size, successfully launched and completed a major capital campaign, and expanded the size and scope of its ballet school. As a choreographer, Liang has created 21 world premieres for BalletMet.

In his new role as The Washington Ballet’s senior-most artistic leader, Liang will oversee all aspects of the company, including its creative vision; its professional Company and training studio; The Washington School of Ballet, with campuses in Cathedral Heights and at THEARC in Southeast Washington, D.C.; and the organization’s robust community engagement programs.

Liang is currently in Washington, D.C. this week for his appointment announcement, planning meetings and the [start of The Washington Ballet’s 2023–2024 season](#), which opens Thursday, October 26 at the Warner Theater.

“Edwaard brings to The Washington Ballet a deep commitment to the art form, a passion for continued learning and an authentic interest in our community. He is part of our DNA. I look forward to the collaborative energy Edwaard brings to the organization and the future we will foster together,” said **Karen Shepherd**, Interim Managing Director and Liang’s administrative counterpart.

Liang becomes only the fourth artistic director in TWB’s history, stepping into a position currently filled by Acting Artistic Director **Trinidad Vives**. He succeeds artistic directors **Julie Kent** (2016–2023); **Septime Webre** (1999–2016); and **Mary Day** (1967–1999), who founded TWB as a ballet school in 1944 and established it as a professional company in 1976.

Liang’s appointment concludes a year-long international search led by a Search Committee of The Washington Ballet’s Board of Directors, in coordination with David Mallette and his team at **Management Consultants for the Arts**.

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Commenting on the conclusion of the search, Fernandez, who headed the Search Committee, said, “At each phase of this search, we prioritized listening to our stakeholders, including and especially our dancers and the broader cultural community in Washington, D.C. All groups were remarkably consistent and clear on the qualities they wanted in our next leader: an innovator who can simultaneously honor classical ballet and lead with a future-looking vision, and a collaborative community builder eager to embrace the opportunities unique to Washington, D.C. — an international city, a diverse city, and our home. Edwaard embodies all of these qualities and more. Today marks the start of a vibrant new era for The Washington Ballet.”

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***High-resolution images are linked through or available upon request.***

[Headshot](#): Edwaard Liang, credit Chiun-Kai Shih.

[Performance image](#): Dancers of The Washington Ballet in Edwaard Liang’s *Wunderland* (2009), credit Theo Kossenias.

