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USA INTERNATIONAL BALLET COMPETITION SELECTS ARTHUR MITCHELL AS HONORARY CHAIRPERSON

Jackson, Miss., January 19, 2010 – [Arthur Mitchell](#), founding artistic director of [Dance Theatre of Harlem](#), has been chosen as the Honorary Chairman of the [USA International Ballet Competition](#), which will be held June 12 -27, 2010 at Thalia Mara Hall in Jackson, Mississippi.

“Arthur Mitchell is known around the world as an accomplished artistic director, astute educator, talented choreographer and extraordinary dancer,” said Sue Lobrano, USA IBC executive director. “With his impressive background and history, it was a natural choice for us to select him as our national honorary chairperson for the 2010 competition.”

Mitchell began his dance training at New York City’s High School of the Performing Arts, where he was the first male student to win the coveted Annual Dance Award. Mitchell continued his classical training when he received a full scholarship to the School of American Ballet. In 1955, he was the first African American male to become a permanent member of a major ballet company when he joined the New York City Ballet.

During his 15-year career with the New York City Ballet, Mitchell rose quickly to the rank of principal dancer and electrified audiences with his performances in a broad spectrum of roles.

In 1966, Mitchell was asked to organize the American Negro Dance Company, which represented the United States at the first World Festival of Negro Arts in Senegal. In 1967, at the request of the United States International Association, he founded the National Ballet Company of Brazil in Rio de Janeiro.

In 1968, Mitchell was inspired to provide children, especially those living in Harlem, with the opportunity to study dance. During the summer of 1968 he began teaching classes in a remodeled garage. In 1969 Mitchell founded Dance Theatre of Harlem with his mentor and ballet instructor

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Karel Shook. As a professional dance company and a school of the allied arts, the continued expansion of Dance Theatre of Harlem into a multi-cultural institution has attracted thousands of professional dancers and students from around the world. Arthur Mitchell adds to the legacy every day as Dance Theatre of Harlem's Founding Artistic Director.

Mitchell has earned honors for a wide variety of organizations. In 1993, he was honored by The Kennedy Center Honors, which celebrated an extraordinary lifetime of contributions to American culture through the performing arts. Additionally, in 1994, he earned the [National Medal of the Arts](#), which is the highest honor awarded by the President of the United States in Arts and Humanities.

The USA IBC is a two-week, "olympic-style" competition where tomorrow's stars vie for gold, silver and bronze medals; cash awards; company contracts; and scholarships. The event is designated as the official international ballet competition in the United States by a Joint Resolution of Congress. Presented under the auspices of the International Dance Committee, International Theatre Institute of UNESCO, the USA IBC is held every four years in Jackson, Miss., in the tradition of sister competitions in Varna, Bulgaria, and Moscow, Russia.

For more information visit www.usaibc.com or join our Facebook communities. Search USA International Ballet Competition to find Fans of the USA International Ballet Competition, an open group for the general public, or USA International Ballet Competition Prospective Competitors, an open group for dancers wishing to compete in the 2010 USA IBC.

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