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BRENDA WAY AND KIMI OKADA HONORED WITH DANCE MAGAZINE AWARD TO BE PRESENTED IN LOS ANGELES ON DECEMBER 8



Brenda Way, left, photographed by Vincent Gotti, and Kimi Okada, photo courtesy of ODC.

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SAN FRANCISCO, CA, September 17, 2025 – Dance Media Foundation in conjunction with *Dance Magazine* has announced the honorees for the 68th annual Dance Magazine Awards, including ODC Founder and Artistic Director **Brenda Way** and **Kimi Okada**, a founding member of ODC and the company's associate choreographer. Okada also directs ODC School and ODC's pre-professional teen company, ODC Dance Jam.

A tradition dating back to 1954, the Dance Magazine Awards are given "in appreciation of the artistry, integrity and resilience that dance artists have demonstrated over the course of their careers," writes the editorial board of *Dance Magazine*. This year's event will have a special West Coast focus. While the ceremony has historically been held in New York City, this year it will be hosted in Los Angeles, at the Debbie Allen Dance Academy.

The awards ceremony will take place on December 8, 2025, at 7 p.m. PT, and tickets, starting at \$95, are now on sale at store.dancemediacom/product/dance-magazine-awards-2025.

Debbie Allen will be presented with *Dance Magazine's* Chairman's Award for her work as an educator. The other awardees include **Donald Byrd**, **Frances Chung**, **Mandy Moore**, **Kenny Ortega** and **Lula**

Washington. Harkness Promise Awards, offering a small grant and rehearsal space subsidy, will go to **Annie Rigney** and **Micaela Taylor**. Finally, four posthumous awards will pay tribute to **Stephen “tWitch” Boss, Janet Collins, Lester Horton** and **Michael Peters**.

“Our pleasure in receiving this award is only exceeded by our appreciation of this recognition of dance in the West,” said Way.

For more information about the Dance Magazine Awards, visit dancemagazine.com/2025-dance-magazine-award-honorees-announcement.

ABOUT BRENDA WAY

Brenda Way received her early training at The School of American Ballet and Ballet Arts in New York City. She is the Founder and Artistic Director of ODC/Dance and creator of the ODC Theater and ODC Dance Commons, community performance and training venues in San Francisco’s Mission District. Way was instrumental in forming an inter-arts department at Oberlin College and Conservatory of Music in the late 1960’s before relocating to the Bay Area in 1976.

She has choreographed more than 100 pieces over the last 53 years. Among her commissions are *Unintended Consequences: A Meditation* (2008) Equal Justice Society; *Life is a House* (2008) San Francisco Girls Chorus; *On a Train Heading South* (2005) CSU Monterey Bay; *Remnants of Song* (2002) Stanford Lively Arts; *Scissors Paper Stone* (1994) Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater; *Western Women* (1993) Cal Performances, Rutgers University and Jacob’s Pillow; *Ghosts of an Old Ceremony* (1991) Walker Art Center and The Minnesota Orchestra; *Krazy Kat* (1990) San Francisco Ballet; *This Point in Time* (1987) Oakland Ballet; *Tamina* (1986) San Francisco Performances; *Invisible Cities* (1985) Stanford Lively Arts and the Robotics Research Laboratory. Her work *Investigating Grace* was named an NEA American Masterpiece in 2011.

In 2024, Way was inducted into the California Hall of Fame and is being featured in the NY Public Library’s Jerome Robbins’ Dance Division Oral History Project. Her work was selected by the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2010 to represent the US in a tour of Southeast Asia, as part of the inaugural DanceMotion touring program sponsored by the US Department of State. She is a national spokesperson for dance, has been published widely, has received numerous awards including Isadora Duncan Dance Awards for both choreography and sustained achievement, and 40 years of support from the National Endowment for the Arts. She is a 2000 recipient of the John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship. In 2009, she was the first choreographer to be a Resident of the Arts at the American Academy in Rome, and in 2012, she received the Helen Crocker Russell Award for Community Leadership from the SF Foundation. She has recently been commissioned to make a work with composer Mason Bates for the Naples Orchestra, and she is currently involved in helping to reimagine the future of CASA, formerly the San Francisco Arts Institute. Way holds a Ph.D. in aesthetics and is the mother of four children.

ABOUT KIMI OKADA

Kimi Okada is a founding member of ODC. Her work includes more than 30 choreographies for ODC/Dance, as well as commissions and collaborations with Geoff Hoyle, Bill Irwin, Julie Taymor and Robin Williams. She has choreographed productions for the American Conservatory Theater of San Francisco, Yale Repertory Theater, the New Victory Theater in New York, the Children’s Theater Company in Minneapolis, Theatre for a New Audience in New York, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, the

American Music Theater Festival, the Santa Fe Opera, Los Angeles Music Center Opera, Los Angeles Theatre Center, the Pickle Family Circus and the San Francisco Mime Troupe.

She was nominated for a Tony Award for the Broadway production of *Largely New York*, which she co-choreographed with Bill Irwin. She received a 2014 Isadora Duncan Award for Outstanding Choreography for ODC's *Two If by Sea*. Since 1996, Okada has served as director of ODC School, which she has brought to the forefront of international and national dance education for youth and adults. She has been honored with a California State Legislature Assembly Resolution for choreographic and community contributions. She also directs ODC's pre-professional teen company, ODC Dance Jam.

ABOUT ODC

Founded in 1971 by Artistic Director Brenda Way, ODC is a groundbreaking contemporary arts institution: a world-class dance company (ODC/Dance), a theater with year-round presenting and mentorship programs (ODC Theater), a training school for dancers and movers of all levels (ODC School), and a fee-free, educational Healthy Dancers' Clinic. Known nationally for its entrepreneurial savvy and artistic innovation, ODC is unique for its holistic vision, now including a robust digital platform. With its home in San Francisco's Mission District, ODC makes a dynamic contribution to the Bay Area's vibrant dance and arts ecosystem, cultivating artists, inspiring audiences, engaging the community, and fostering diversity and inclusion through dance performance, training and mentorship.