

Garth Fagan receives prestigious designation

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Garth Fagan, here during a rehearsal for the winter concert, has won a prestigious honor from the Dance Heritage Coalition. / JAMIE GERMANO/Staff file photo

Rochester choreographer Garth Fagan has landed in a high-flying company of dancers — but not the Garth Fagan Dance troupe that he founded 40 years ago.

He's one of 12 dance celebrities who will join the Dance Heritage Coalition's list of "America's Irreplaceable Dance Treasures." The roster also includes former New York City Ballet star Jacques de'Amboise, international ballerina Maria Tallchief, the Rockettes of Manhattan's Radio City Music Hall, and the late rocker Michael Jackson.

"I'm very proud to be on the same list as Jacques d'Amboise," said Fagan, 72, a Rochester resident. "I'm not going to say anything about The Rockettes."

The honorees were nominated by a national survey and confirmed by the National Dance Coalition's board. The coalition is the only national nonprofit that documents, preserves and publicizes materials about America's dance legacy.

Paying tribute to Garth Fagan Dance, the coalition wrote that Fagan "has developed a roster of dancers renowned for their grace and strength, and his celebrated choreography combines aspects of ballet, modern and Afro-Caribbean dance."

The 12 dance stars will be celebrated on the coalition's website, danceheritage.org, along with 100 earlier honorees. That pantheon includes major choreographers such as Martha Graham, George Balanchine and Alvin Ailey.

Fagan previously won the 1998 Tony Award for best choreography for *The Lion King* and the 2001 Scripps American Dance Festival Award, to name just a few of his honors. Garth Fagan Dance's recent New York City premiere of his *Lighthouse/Lightning Rod* won raves from the local newspapers and dance publications.

"My next stop is Brazil," he said. "I'll be leaving in late January to do auditions and rehearsals for the new Sao Paulo production of *The Lion King*."

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