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**Baryshnikov Arts Receives \$2 Million from the Mellon Foundation  
to Support the Work of Artist Kaoru Watanabe,  
in the Creation of the *Bloodlines Interwoven Festival***

**Baryshnikov Arts (Sonja Kostich, President and Executive Director)** today announces that it has received a grant for \$2 Million from the **Mellon Foundation** to support the first iterations of the new *Bloodlines Interwoven Festival*, with acclaimed composer and musician **Kaoru Watanabe** as Artistic Director. Taking place for one week each summer beginning in 2024, with a confirmed second run in 2025, the grant will support the work of Kaoru Watanabe and dozens of diasporic performers, scholars, and artists.

The first annual *Bloodlines Interwoven Festival* will take place in June 2024 and has been conceived as a durational dialogue of diaspora musicians and other artists, and a sharing of all that makes up culture—language, food, religions, customs, and philosophies. Presenting a broad range of traditions as they speak to one another—the “bloodlines” of the festival’s title—and a full plate of approaches in music and other artistic disciplines, *Bloodlines* will seek out and embrace original and unique perspectives and concepts. Conceived as a celebration of many cultural and personal stories, human differences, the Festival celebrates how we can, in coming together, create new vocabularies and new means of dialogue in an ever-fracturing world. Celebrating diasporas and looking at how and why people end up where they do, *Bloodlines* will be a true cross-cultural exploration via art, focusing on the multi-generational life journeys it took for each artist and attendee to get there.

Bloodlines Artistic Director Kaoru Watanabe said, “Artists confront, embrace, and propel forward the rituals, traditions, songs, and dances passed on through generations and carried in our bodies. I’ve dedicated myself to blending my heritage and musical experiences into a unique aesthetic for decades. The trust and support from the Mellon Foundation and Baryshnikov Arts are testament to a journey that, while personal, resonates with a broader artistic community. This opportunity will allow me and my fellow artists to delve even deeper into our stories unapologetically, explore profound new ways of seeing the world through the eyes of others, and share these discoveries with a broader audience.”

“We are so grateful to the Mellon Foundation for this vital \$2 Million grant. It makes it possible for Baryshnikov Arts to continue its dedication to the cultivation and support of new perspectives as we focus on developing our organization beyond the scope of its current structures. With the help of this important grant, Baryshnikov Arts will further its mission of supporting artists in order to help create a transformative sense of belonging and community,” said Sonja Kostich, President and Executive Director, Baryshnikov Arts.”

Baryshnikov Arts Founder and Artistic Director, Mikhail Baryshnikov said “This is the fiftieth year since my arrival in the West. It's here I found the freedom to pursue my artistic journey and Baryshnikov Arts was founded to help other artists enjoy that same freedom. I am moved and humbled by the Mellon Foundation's generous support of our mission. It will ensure the commitment of Baryshnikov Arts to artists as critical interpreters of our past, present and future.”

Acclaimed composer and instrumentalist **Kaoru Watanabe's** work is grounded in traditional Japanese music while imbued with contemporary jazz, improvisation, and experimental music elements. His signature skill of infusing Japanese culture with disparate styles has made him a much-in-demand collaborator working with such iconic artists as Wes Anderson, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Laurie Anderson, Jason Moran, Yo-Yo Ma, Japanese National Living Treasure Bando Tamasaburo, Eva Yerbabuena, Silkroad Ensemble, and Rhiannon Giddens. A trained jazz musician, he lived in Japan for a decade, where he became the first American to become a performer and Artistic Director of the iconic taiko drumming ensemble Kodo. Each collaboration, each note, and each interwoven bloodline deepens his understanding of the world and his place within its vast musical landscape.

### **About The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**

**The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation** is the nation's largest supporter of the arts and humanities. Since 1969, the Foundation has been guided by its core belief that the humanities and arts are essential to human understanding. The Foundation believes that the arts and humanities are where we express our complex humanity, and that everyone deserves the beauty, transcendence, and freedom that can be found there. Through our grants, we seek to build just communities enriched by meaning and empowered by critical thinking, where ideas and imagination can thrive. Learn more at [mellon.org](https://mellon.org).

### **About Baryshnikov Arts**

**Baryshnikov Arts**, founded in 2005 by Mikhail Baryshnikov, is rooted in the belief that artists hold irreplaceable roles in our world, shaping perspectives, offering new approaches, and initiating crucial conversations in complex social, political, and cultural environments. Baryshnikov Arts supports extraordinary performers to experiment with unique artistic expression that asks audiences to view the world in new ways. We offer performance opportunities, artist residencies, and more. In October 2022 Baryshnikov Arts welcomed a new Executive Director, Sonja Kostich, who brings with her both the knowledge and experience of having been a professional dancer for over two decades, as well as significant business acumen derived from both her business education and time working at Goldman Sachs. As a female Korean American, her history, both personal and professional, lends itself to cultivating and supporting new perspectives. With the recent re-brand of the organization in June 2023, Baryshnikov Arts expands its capacity to create multi-platform and collaborative havens for artistic expression, innovation and freedom as we commit further to elevating and sharing the stories of artists of diverse cultures and histories. [baryshnikovarts.org](https://baryshnikovarts.org)