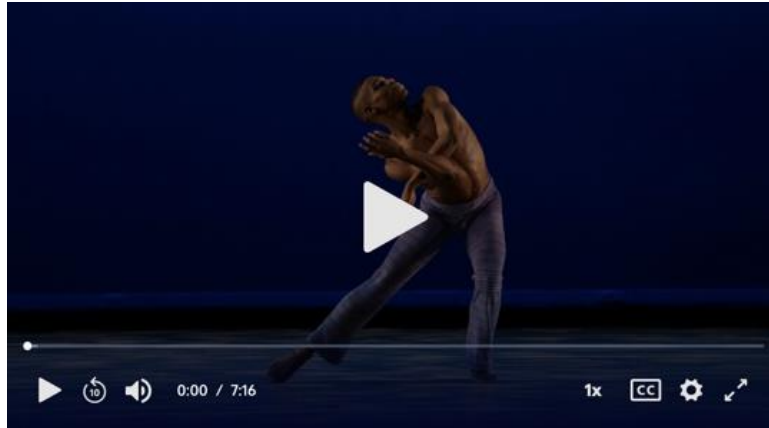


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How Dancer Elijah Lancaster Found His Way to The Stage

By: All Arts Staff
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This segment aired on 11/9/22: <https://www.allarts.org/programs/rising-artist/elijah-lancaster-ajteaf/> (7:16 minutes)



For [Elijah Lancaster](#), the love of dance took root at age six. The seed was seeing Desmond Richardson perform in New York City with [Complexions Contemporary Ballet](#).

“He was on stage in a solo, in a spotlight with a chair, and the moment his leg went up, I saw the muscles,” Lancaster, now a company member at [Dallas Black Dance Theatre](#), recounts in a recent episode of “[Rising Artist](#).” “I saw the just vibrancy he had on the stage, and I knew I wanted to be in that same realm as he was. So, sitting on the edge of my seat, six years old, just really into it, and I was like, ‘Wow, this is what I wanna do.’ I want to invest my life to be what he is right now.”



And so, at seven-years-old, Lancaster began his training at Aspire Dance in Arkansas, where he moved after being adopted in Haiti at age three. At first, the commitment required him to balance the demands of school with traveling to dance three or four times a week. Eventually, the dancer switched to homeschooling to accommodate the schedule. As a young dancer, taking part in competitions, Lancaster explains on “[Rising Artist](#),” taught him not only to be versatile in style but to be disciplined — a skill that would carry over to his professional career.



“It is very rigorous to be a professional dancer, because it’s really a commitment to a lifestyle. You have to have the self-discipline,” he says later on in the interview. “You have to make sure you know

what you’re doing when you walk into the building. You have to also look a part, because kids are looking up to you and they’re wanting to be where you are.” Lancaster credits his mother as the one who pushed him to learn more about Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, where he would continue his training. “I think my mom really wanted me to find my roots in Black ancestry, and Ailey was the best way to do that,” Lancaster explains in the episode. “It helped me involve myself a little bit better because in Arkansas, it’s kind of hard to find an outlet for being a Black man there. So knowing that I was going to be in a place where I was surrounded by Black excellence, it was the perfect place to go.”

In 2018, the dancer graduated from the Ailey School’s Certificate Program, going on to perform with groups such as XY Dance Project, The Black Iris Project and his current company, Dallas Black Dance Theatre. At the time of filming his episode of “[Rising Artist](#),” Lancaster was dancing with Ailey II, the second company at Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. “Working with my company members has been fantastic. Everybody’s so open, so nice. And we really bring each other up throughout the process,” Lancaster says in the episode. “It may be strenuous at times, but we know that we’re all in it together. And that feeling in the room of that vibrating like excitement of what’s to come next and where we’re going to go and how tour is going to be.”

He continues: “It’s really exciting to know that we’re all growing in multiple ways, maturity wise, dance wise, artistry wise and just as human beings. Knowing what the world needs and trying to be that for the world.” Catch the full interview with Elijah Lancaster in the video above and on the “[Rising Artist](#)” page. All Arts “[Rising Artist](#)”: Elijah Lancaster is also available on [YouTube](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).