



Alvin Ailey dancers give free lessons to community before Boston shows

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BOSTON - Movement, music, and "Ailey magic" drew a dancing crowd to the Salvation Army Kroc Center in Boston Wednesday night. Dancers of all ages and abilities came to experience the energy and emotion of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre.

"I feel like I'm a part of Mr. Ailey's legacy. When he founded his company in 1958 to celebrate the beauty of the African American experience and modern dance tradition, he wanted to put the beauty of Black people forward," said professional dancer Yannick Lebrun of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Company.

Before their annual Boston tour stop Thursday, the company made community a priority. "It's amazing to know this was free. Being on a budget it's great. They also had a show at the Boch Center. I wasn't able to go. It was a blessing to be here and be a part of this," said Boston neighbor Angela Peebles.

Parents came with their kids. "I just felt shivers. It was really pretty. A special moment. Alvin Ailey is such an important part of our history so I'm so excited to have them exposed to that," said mother Waetisanaa Cooper-Brunette. "It was fun. Really fun. I felt happy and excited. And it's really unique, the different dances. I really loved it," her daughter Charlotte added.

And former dancers revisited their roots. "It felt invigorating and exciting to learn something new and relaxing and calming - the dance moves they incorporate kind of seem like it's good for the soul and body," said Sienna Speed-Northcross. Everyone was moved by the way this music and choreography made them feel. "The part where it was like a mystery. It felt like a spy closing a case. I like that you can be free and open to do what you want," said 10-year-old Nate.

"It's bringing a lot of joy, helps with mental health and anxiety. Helps with everything," said Vlady Dominique. After these Ailey community events were interrupted by the pandemic for years, this class was a real return to the company's mission. "It's part of our mission to give back. Mr Ailey said dance came from the people, and it should always be delivered back to the people," Lebrun added. The Ailey company is in town for its annual run of performances this week (May 4-7) at the Boch Center Wang Theater, presented -- as they are each year -- by Celebrity Series of Boston.