

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

PressKit 2023–24



Constance Stamatiou. Photo by Dario Calmese

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in a reimagining of Alvin Ailey's Revelations at Wave Hill PGCC. Photo by Travis Magee

On March 30, 1958, Alvin Ailey led a group of young African-American modern dancers in a now-fabled performance at the 92nd Street Y in New York City that forever changed the perception of American dance. Mr. Ailey was a pioneer in establishing a multi-racial repertory company that presented important works by both dance masters and emerging choreographers. Regarded as one of the world's premiere dance companies, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is a recipient of the National Medal of Arts and is recognized by a U.S. Congressional resolution as a vital American "Cultural Ambassador to the World." Having performed in 71 countries on 6 continents for an estimated 25 million people worldwide—as well as millions more through television broadcasts, film screenings, and online platforms—Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater continues to inspire and unite people of all backgrounds around the globe.

Before his untimely death in 1989, Mr. Ailey named Judith Jamison as his successor, and over the next 21 years, she brought the

Company to unprecedented success. Judith Jamison chose Robert Battle to succeed her on July 1, 2011 and he served as Artistic Director through 2023. Interim Artistic Director Matthew Rushing, supported by Ailey's artistic team, will be leading the Company in its 65th anniversary season, which includes a coast-to-coast tour. Through the remarkable artistry of extraordinary dancers, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater continues to celebrate the African-American cultural experience and to preserve and enrich the American modern dance tradition. With a repertory of over 235 works by more than 90 choreographers and a permanent home at The Joan Weill Center for Dance in New York City—the largest building dedicated to dance in New York City, the dance capital of the world—the Ailey legacy flourishes, using the universal language of dance as a medium for honoring the past, celebrating the present and fearlessly reaching into the future.

For further information, visit pressroom.alvinailey.org

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER IS APPLAUDED BY AUDIENCES AND CRITICS ALIKE

"Nothing prepares you for the totality of Alvin Ailey: the aural, visual, physical, spiritual beauty...Heaven...Everywhere you looked: sensory pleasure..."

— **THE NEW YORK TIMES, ZADIE SMITH**

"Five Stars. The pioneering company's warmth and athletic grace is showcased in a selection of old and new work. There's something generous about Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. It's there in the dancing – full of skill, passion and a charismatic warmth"

— **THE GUARDIAN, SARAH CROMPTON**

"In its sixty-year history, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre has enjoyed an inspiring ascent from hardscrabble origins to a long, still unchallenged reign as America's most popular dance company..."

— **THE NEW YORKER**

"...how fabulously individual the dancers all are. Each is an immediately distinct character..."

— **THE NEW YORK TIMES**



In accordance with groundbreaking choreographer Alvin Ailey's dictum that "dance is for everybody," the Ailey organization offers dance performances, training and education and community programs that use the American modern dance tradition and the beauty of the African-American heritage and other cultures to enlighten, unite and inspire all people.



THE AILEY SCHOOL

In 1969, Alvin Ailey founded The Ailey School in Brooklyn, NY, with an initial enrollment of 125 students. Guided by Mr. Ailey's mission that dance is for everybody, the School offers programs for aspiring dancers from ages 3 to 25 and is directed by Tracy Inman and Melanie person.



ARTS IN EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

The Ailey Organization is committed to bringing dance into classrooms, communities and lives of people throughout the world. Each year, more than 100,000 people from diverse backgrounds enjoy the opportunity to explore their creative potential and build their self-esteem while fostering an appreciation for the art of dance.



THE AILEY/FORDHAM BFA IN DANCE PROGRAM

The BFA in Dance offers the best of two worlds: the artistic pre-eminence of The Ailey School combined with Fordham University's exceptional liberal arts education that stresses intellectual development and personal growth.



AILEYCAMP

The unique summer day camp serves underserved youth ages 11 to 14. The program provides a safe environment where they can explore their creativity and strengthen their respect for themselves and others within a supportive framework that gives them an important foundation for the future. AileyCamps are currently operating in ten cities around the country, including NYC.



AILEY II

Ailey II is universally renowned for merging the spirit and energy of the country's best young dance talent with the passion and creative vision of today's most outstanding emerging choreographers. Under the vision of Artistic Director Francesca Harper, Ailey II will continue to expand the bridge from the classroom to the stage that Alvin Ailey created to constantly propel each new generation of artists forward.



AILEY EXTENSION

Ailey Extension offers students around the world "real classes for real people" at all levels in a welcoming, non-competitive environment. Nearly 40 dynamic classes are offered each week with in-studio, virtual, and hybrid class options, taught by expert teachers in West African, Zumba®, Hip-Hop, Ballet, Horton (the modern dance technique featured in Mr. Ailey's classic, *Revelations*) and more.



AILEY'S HOME

In 2005, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater opened its permanent home, The Joan Weill Center for Dance, on 55th Street and 9th Avenue in Manhattan. The striking glass-enclosed building is the largest building dedicated to dance in New York City, the dance capital of the world. In 2017, The Elaine Wynn and Family Education Wing, added three floors to west side of Ailey's building, including four dance studios to reach a total of 16, two flexible classrooms, and much more.

ALVIN AILEY

Alvin Ailey was born on January 5, 1931, in Rogers, Texas. His experiences of life in the rural South would later inspire some of his most memorable works. Mr. Ailey was introduced to dance in Los Angeles by performances of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and the Katherine Dunham Dance Company, and his formal dance training began with an introduction to Lester Horton's classes by his friend Carmen de Lavallade. Horton, the founder of one of the first racially-integrated dance companies in the United States, became a mentor for Mr. Ailey as he embarked on his professional career. After Horton's death in 1953, Mr. Ailey became director of the Lester Horton Dance Theater and began to choreograph his own works. In the 1950s and 60s, Mr. Ailey performed in four Broadway shows, including *House of Flowers* and *Jamaica*.

In 1958, he led a group of young black modern dancers in a performance in New York City that changed forever the perception of American dance. Since then, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater – a company dedicated to enriching the American modern dance heritage and preserving the uniqueness of the African-American cultural experience – has gone on to perform for an estimated 25 million people in 71 countries on six continents. He created 79 ballets in his lifetime – including his first masterpiece, 1958's *Blues Suite*; his must-see signature work *Revelations*, which has been seen by more people around the world than any other work of modern dance since its 1960 premiere; the acclaimed tour-de-force female solo created for his mother in 1971, *Cry*; and several works set to music by jazz greats such as Duke Ellington, Charlie "Bird" Parker, and Hugh Masekela – but maintained that his company was not exclusively a repository for his own work. His ballets have appeared in the repertoires of major dance companies around the world, including American Ballet Theatre; The Joffrey Ballet; Dance Theatre of Harlem; Paris Opera Ballet; and

La Scala Ballet, and he choreographed operas for the openings of such esteemed institutions as The Metropolitan Opera House (Samuel Barber's *Antony and Cleopatra* in 1966) and The Kennedy Center (Leonard Bernstein's *Mass* in 1971).

He established the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center (now The Ailey School) in 1969 and formed the Alvin Ailey Repertory Ensemble (now Ailey II) in 1974. Mr. Ailey was a pioneer of programs promoting arts in education, and the final program he launched before his passing in 1989 was AileyCamp – a full-scholarship summer day camp for young people ages 11 – 14 in underserved communities, now in 10 cities nationwide.

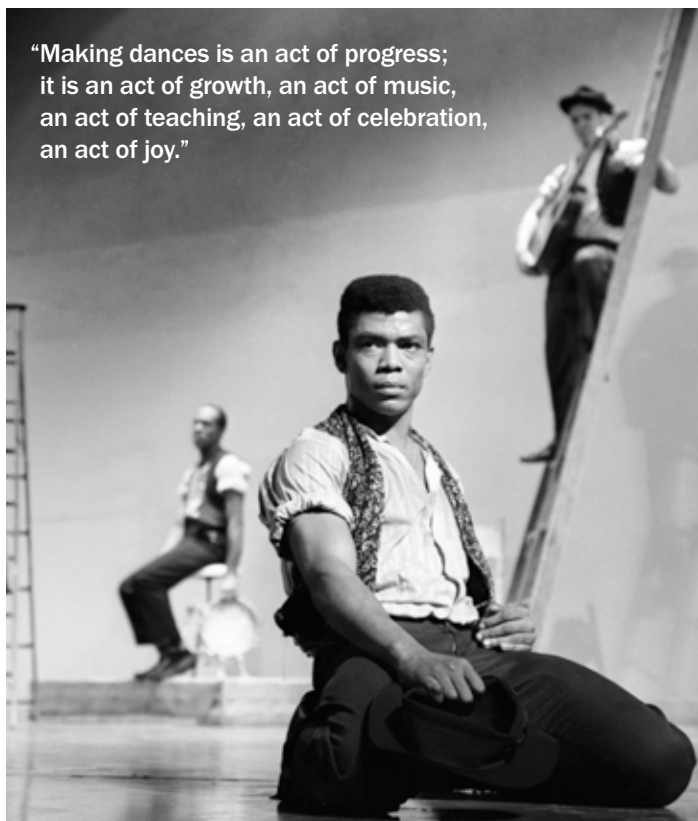
Throughout his lifetime, Alvin Ailey received numerous honors and awards, including several honorary doctoral degrees, a 1976 NAACP Spingarn Award, and a 1982 United Nations Peace Medal. From the dance world, he received the 1975 Dance Magazine Award, the 1979 Capezio Award and modern dance's most prestigious prize—the Samuel H. Scripps American Dance Festival Award—in 1987. In 1988, he received the Kennedy Center Honor in recognition of his extraordinary contribution to American culture and achievement in the performing arts. He was posthumously awarded the 2014 Presidential Medal of Freedom – the country's highest civilian honor – in recognition of his contributions and commitment to civil rights and dance in America, as well as the 2017 Logo Trailblazer Honor, celebrating him as a leader at the forefront of LGBTQ equality. He was also the subject of *Alvin Ailey: A Life in Dance*, Jennifer Dunning's moving 1998 biography.

When Mr. Ailey died on December 1, 1989, The New York Times said of him, "you didn't need to have known [him] personally to have been touched by his humanity, enthusiasm, and exuberance and his courageous stand for multi-racial brotherhood."

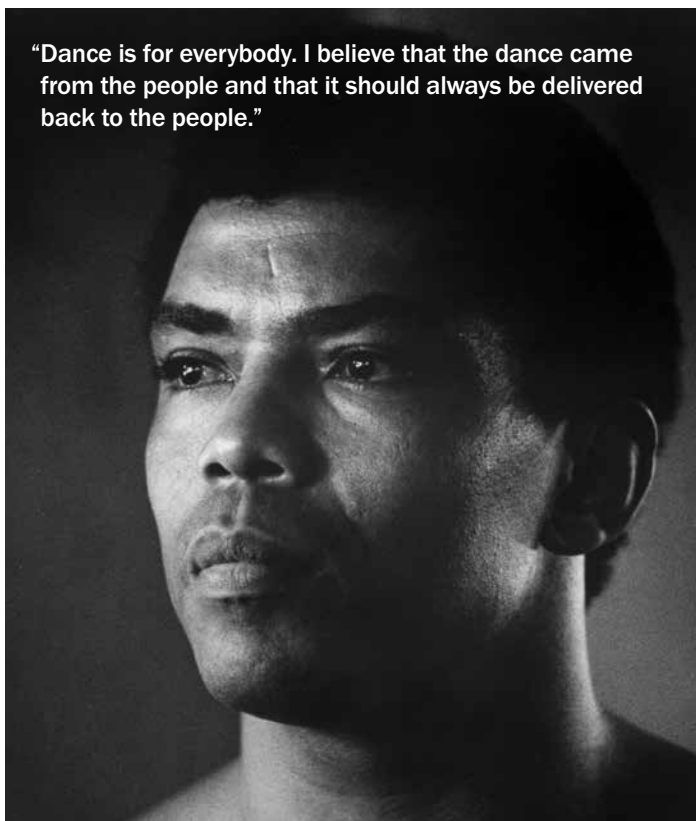


ALVIN AILEY IN HIS OWN WORDS

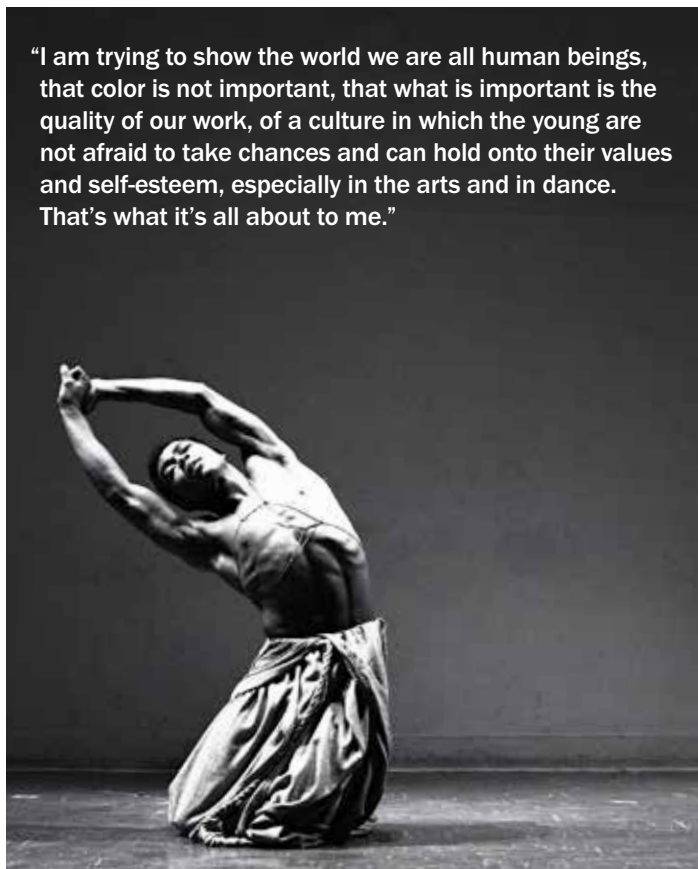
"Making dances is an act of progress; it is an act of growth, an act of music, an act of teaching, an act of celebration, an act of joy."



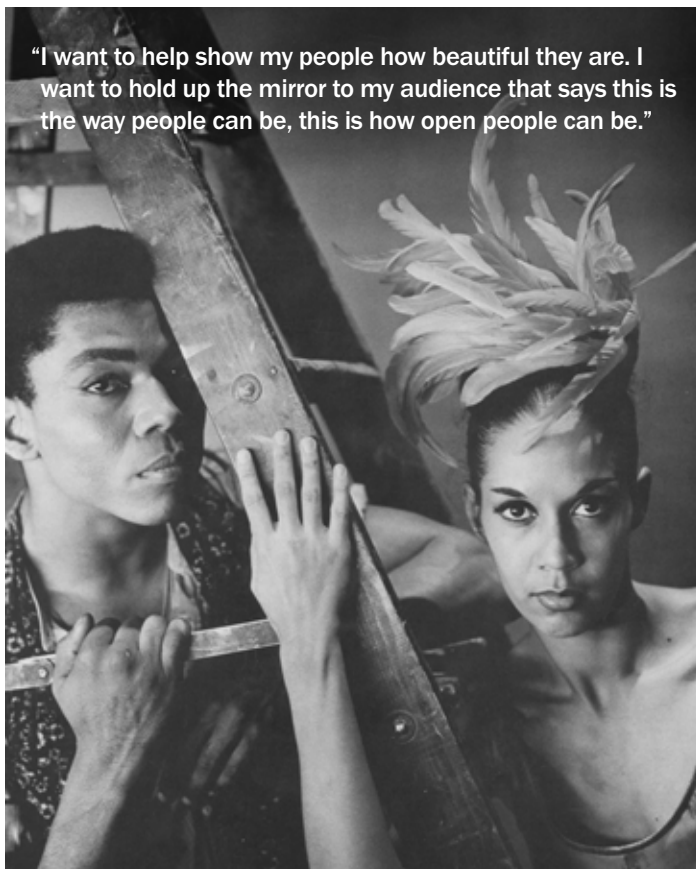
"Dance is for everybody. I believe that the dance came from the people and that it should always be delivered back to the people."



"I am trying to show the world we are all human beings, that color is not important, that what is important is the quality of our work, of a culture in which the young are not afraid to take chances and can hold onto their values and self-esteem, especially in the arts and in dance. That's what it's all about to me."



"I want to help show my people how beautiful they are. I want to hold up the mirror to my audience that says this is the way people can be, this is how open people can be."



THE COMPANY LEADERSHIP



JUDITH JAMISON ARTISTIC DIRECTOR EMERITA

Judith Jamison joined Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1965 and quickly became an international star. Over the next 15 years, Mr. Ailey created some of his most enduring roles for her, most notably the tour-de-force solo *Cry*. During the 1970s and 80s, she appeared as a guest artist with ballet companies all over the world, starred in the hit Broadway musical *Sophisticated Ladies*, and formed her own company, The Jamison Project. She returned to Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1989 when Mr. Ailey asked her to succeed him as Artistic Director. In the 21 years that followed, she brought the Company to unprecedented heights – including two historic engagements in South Africa and a 50-city global tour to celebrate the Company's 50th anniversary. Ms. Jamison is the recipient of numerous awards and honors, among them a prime time Emmy Award, an American Choreography Award, the Kennedy Center Honor, a National Medal of Arts, a "Bessie" Award, the Phoenix Award, and the Handel Medallion. She was also listed in *"TIME 100: The World's Most Influential People"* and honored by First Lady Michelle Obama at the first White House Dance Series event. In 2015, she became the 50th inductee into the Hall of Fame at the National Museum of Dance. As a highly regarded choreographer, Ms. Jamison has created many celebrated works, including *Divining* (1984), *Forgotten Time* (1989), *Hymn* (1993), *HERE . . . NOW*. (commissioned for the 2002 Cultural Olympiad), *Love Stories*

(with additional choreography by Robert Battle and Rennie Harris, 2004), and *Among Us (Private Spaces: Public Places)* (2009). Ms. Jamison's autobiography, *Dancing Spirit*, was edited by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and published in 1993. In 2004, under Ms. Jamison's artistic directorship, her idea of a permanent home for the Ailey company was realized and named after beloved chairman emerita Joan Weill. In 2019, Ms. Jamison and members of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater participated in a TED Talk, sharing Revelations from a Lifetime in Dance. Ms. Jamison continues to dedicate herself to asserting the prominence of the arts in our culture, and she remains committed to promoting the significance of the Ailey legacy – using dance as a medium for honoring the past, celebrating the present and fearlessly reaching into the future.



MATTHEW RUSHING INTERIM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Matthew Rushing was born in Los Angeles, CA. He began his dance training with Kashmir Blake in Inglewood, California and later continued his training at the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts. He is the recipient of a Spotlight Award and Dance Magazine Award and was named a Presidential Scholar in the Arts. He was a scholarship student at The Ailey School and later became a member of Ailey II, where he danced for a year. During his career, Mr. Rushing has performed as a guest artist for galas in Vail, Colorado, as well as in Austria, Canada, France, Italy, and Russia. He has performed for Presidents George H. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama, as well as at the 2010 White House tribute to Judith Jamison. During his time with the Company, he has choreographed three ballets: *Acceptance In Surrender* (2005), a collaboration with Hope Boykin and Abdur-Rahim Jackson, *Uptown* (2009), a tribute to the Harlem Renaissance, and *ODETTA* (2014), a celebration of "The queen of American folk." In 2012 he created *Moan*, which was set on Philadanco and premiered at The Joyce Theater. Mr. Rushing joined the Company in 1992, became Rehearsal Director 2010, and was appointed Associate Artistic Director in January 2020. During the 65th anniversary season, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is led by Interim Artistic Director Matthew Rushing.



BENNETT RINK EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Bennett Rink became AILEY's Executive Director in 2013. He first joined the organization as Manager of Special Events in 1994, became Development Director in 1998, and served as Senior Director of Development and External Affairs from 2007 to 2012. In his tenure overseeing AILEY's development and fundraising efforts, Mr. Rink led a major capital campaign to establish the organization's first permanent home, The Joan Weill Center for Dance, which opened in 2005 and attracts more than 200,000 visitors each year. Mr. Rink also oversaw the campaign to build the organization's endowment, which today stands at more than \$150 million. When AILEY celebrated Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's 50th anniversary in 2008, Mr. Rink supervised an 18-month celebration, including events, promotions, collaborations, and special performances, bringing public awareness of the organization to new heights.

During his time as Executive Director, the Company has deepened its presence in New York City by establishing an annual spring season to complement its New York City Center winter season, while also extending its role as America's "Cultural Ambassador to the World" with tours to Africa, Europe, and South America. In order to reach audiences beyond live performances, Mr. Rink has broadened the organization's commitment to creating film and digital content.

Mr. Rink has also extended the reach and impact of AILEY's educational offerings, including the creation of new curricula and programs that reach across generations, from elementary school children to older adults. In 2017 the organization unveiled the Elaine Wynn and Family Education Wing, providing much-needed additional studios and classroom space. The building now comprises 87,000 square feet and is the largest destination for dance in New York City.

In recent years, Mr. Rink has spearheaded a branding initiative to express the totality of AILEY's offerings, creating greater connectivity between Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Ailey II, The Ailey School, Ailey Arts in Education & Community Programs, and Ailey Extension. Currently, he is leading a collaboration with the Whitney Museum on *Edges of Ailey*, a major exhibition that will be on display in the Museum's main gallery space from September 2024 to February 2025 and feature on-site performances by the Ailey companies as well as panel discussions, classes, and dance workshops.

Mr. Rink is a graduate of Syracuse University and holds a BFA in theater.

THE COMPANY LEADERSHIP



RONNI FAVORS REHEARSAL DIRECTOR

Ronni Favors is from Iowa City, Iowa. After studying at the National Music Camp in Interlochen, Michigan, with the Camp Scholarship, she continued her training at The Ailey School as a Fellowship student. Ms. Favors was a member of Ailey II, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company, and a recipient of the Min-On Art Award. Ms. Favors was the ballet instructor at the 1989 inaugural session of AileyCamp in Kansas City and served as Artistic Director of the Camp. She is the Founding Director of Children's Aid AileyCamp New York and provided guidance in the national implementation of the AileyCamp program. In 1997, Ms. Favors was named Assistant Rehearsal Director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and was its Rehearsal Director from 1999 to 2010. She worked with local dance students who performed in Alvin Ailey's *Memoria* in Johannesburg, South Africa, as well as in Seattle, Copenhagen, Los Angeles, Chicago, Kansas City, and New York. Most recently, she set Alvin Ailey's *Night Creature* on TU Dance and Oregon Ballet Theatre. Ms. Favors rejoined the Company as Rehearsal Director in 2019.



CLIFTON BROWN ASSISTANT REHEARSAL DIRECTOR

Clifton Brown (Goodyear, AZ) began his dance training at Take 5 Dance Academy and continued in the first class of the Ailey/Fordham BFA in Dance program. Mr. Brown began his professional career when he joined the Ailey company in 1999 and served as choreographic assistant to Judith Jamison. He has also danced with Earl Mosley's Diversity of Dance, Lar Lubovitch Dance Company, and was a founding member and rehearsal director for Jessica Lang Dance. He was nominated in the U.K. for a Critics Circle National Dance Award for Best Male Dancer and received a Black Theater Arts Award as well as a New York Dance and Performance Award ("The Bessies"). As a guest artist Mr. Brown has performed with Miami City Ballet, Rome Opera Ballet, Nevada Ballet, and Parsons Dance. He has set the work of Alvin Ailey, Earl Mosley, and Jessica Lang on various companies around the world. Television appearances as a guest artist include *So You Think You Can Dance* and *Dancing With The Stars*. He has had the privilege of performing at the White House for President Obama. Mr. Brown rejoined the company in 2017.



KANJI SEGAWA ASSISTANT REHEARSAL DIRECTOR

Kanji Segawa, originally from Kanagawa, Japan, began his dance training with his mother Erika Akoh, studying ballet with Kan Horiuchi and Ju Horiuchi in Tokyo. Segawa was awarded the Japanese Government Artist Fellowship in 1997 to train at The Ailey School. A former member of Ailey II and Battleworks, Segawa danced extensively for Mark Morris and performed as a principal dancer in John Adams' *Nixon in China* at The Metropolitan Opera. Since 1999, Segawa has been Creative Associate for Jessica Lang, assisting her creations for companies worldwide including American Ballet Theatre, Pacific Northwest Ballet, The Royal Ballet, and The National Ballet of Japan. With Lang, Segawa co-choreographed the world premiere production of *Turandot* for The Washington National Opera, directed by Francesca Zambello. He was a dancer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater under the direction of Robert Battle from 2011-2023 and became Assistant Rehearsal Director in 2024.

WHO'S WHO IN THE COMPANY



JEROBOAM BOZEMAN

(Brooklyn, NY) began his training under Ruth Sistaire at the Ronald Edmonds Learning Center. He was granted full scholarships at the Joffrey Ballet School and Dance Theatre of Harlem. He performed in the Broadway musical *Aida* (international tour in China), and with PHILADANCO!,

Donald Byrd's Spectrum Dance Theater, and Ailey II. Mr. Bozeman was a guest artist with The Royal Ballet and was nominated as one of "25 to Watch" by *Dance Magazine* in 2018. He was featured in Bud Light's NFL 100th commercial and Pyer Moss's 2021 "Wat U Iz," fashion show. Mr. Bozeman was a special performer in Disney's live action *The Little Mermaid*. He stars in the independent film *Once Again (for the very first time)* by Director Boaz Yakin. He has appeared in *Vanity Fair*, *Neiman Marcus*, *Double Magazine*, *Seattle Met*, and *The New York Times*. Mr. Bozeman joined the Company in 2013.



KHALIA CAMPBELL

(Bronx, NY) is a graduate of Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts. She began her formal dance training at Uptown Dance Academy. Ms. Campbell also studied at Dance Theatre of Harlem and as a scholarship student at The Ailey School. In 2012 she performed

in Elton John and Tim Rice's Broadway musical *Aida* (international tour in Taiwan). She has performed with Kymera Dance, Dance Iquail, and in the 40th anniversary of *The Wiz* at SummerStage. Ms. Campbell also danced as a guest artist with Richard Siegal's Ballet of Difference in Munich, Germany. She was recognized in *Dance Magazine*'s "25 to Watch" in 2020 and is a 2021 dance fellowship recipient from the Princess Grace Foundation-USA. Ms. Campbell was also featured in Katie Couric's segment of *Thank You Notes* alongside Judith Jamison. She was a member of Ailey II and joined the Company in 2018.



PATRICK COKER

(Chester, VA) was awarded the American Ballet Theatre's National Trainee Scholarship from 2008 to 2010. In May 2014, Coker graduated from the Ailey School/Fordham University BFA Program, where he apprenticed with Ailey II in his final

year. After graduation, he spent a year dancing for Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, and then went on to join Jessica Lang Dance for three seasons. He has also performed with The Mark Morris Dance Group in *The Hard Nut* and *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, Earl Mosley's Diversity of Dance, HopeBoykinDance and LA-based BODYTRAFFIC. Mr. Coker joined the Company in 2019. Find him on Instagram @pcoke.



SHAWN CUSSEAU

(St. Petersburg, Florida) began his training at the Pinellas County Center for the Arts at Gibbs High School where he trained in ballet, modern, and jazz. In 2020, Shawn received his BFA in Modern Dance at Point Park University in Pittsburgh, PA under the

direction of Garfield Lemonius. After graduation he joined BalletX, Philadelphia's premier contemporary ballet company, where he spent three seasons. During that time, he had the privilege of dancing at The Vail International Dance Festival and Ballet Sun Valley. Shawn has performed work by Jae Man Joo, José Limón, Edwaard Liang, Camille A. Brown, Matthew Nenan, Jamar Roberts, Dwight Rhoden, Hope Boykin, Amy Hall Garner, Jennifer Archibald, and Nicolo Fonte. Mr. Cusseaux joined the Company in 2023.

WHO'S WHO IN THE COMPANY



SARAH DALEY-PERDOMO

(South Elgin, IL) began her training at the Faubourg School of Ballet in Illinois under the direction of Watmora Casey and Tatyana Mazur. She is a 2009 graduate of the Ailey/Fordham BFA Program in Dance. Mrs. Daley-Perdomo trained at institutions such

as the Kirov Academy, National Ballet School of Canada, The San Francisco Conservatory of Dance, and intensives at Ballet Camp Illinois and Ballet Adriatico in Italy. Ms. Daley-Perdomo was honored to be highlighted in Dance Magazine's "On the Rise" feature in 2014, and to perform in Wayne McGregor's *Chroma* for the filming of *Lincoln Center at the Movies: Great American Dance*. She is a recipient of a Youth America Grand Prix Award and an ARTS Foundation Award. She was a member of Ailey II and joined the Company in 2011.



CAROLINE T. DARTEY

(Geneva, Switzerland) trained in rhythmic gymnastics in her hometown at the age of five, eventually rising to national and international levels and becoming the Swiss champion in her category from 2009 to 2011. She later began dancing at the Conservatoire

Populaire de Musique, Danse et Théâtre of Geneva. Ms. Darthey also trained at The Ailey School as a scholarship student and performed in Alvin Ailey's *Memoria* during Ailey's 2017 New York City Center season. She was a member of Ailey II from 2018 to 2020 and has performed works choreographed by Darrell Grand Moultrie, Uri Sands, Bradley Shelver, Troy Powell, Robert Battle, Amy Hall Garner, Kirven Douthitt-Boyd, Andrea Miller, Alia Kache, and Yannick Lebrun. Ms. Darthey joined the Company in 2021. Instagram: @caroline_dartey



ISAIAH DAY

(Chicago, IL) began his dance training in Yielded Vessel Dance Ministry at New Life Covenant Southeast. He also studied at Hubbard Street Youth Dance Center and The Chicago Academy for the Arts. He is currently a fourth-year student at The Juilliard School,

under the direction of Alicia Graf Mack, and will graduate in 2024. Mr. Day has performed works by Jamar Roberts, Tiler Peck, Justin Peck, Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, Rena Butler, and Ohad Naharin while at The Juilliard School. In 2019, he was named a YoungArts winner in Modern/Contemporary dance. Mr. Day joined the Company in 2023.



CORAL DOLPHIN

(Los Angeles, CA) studied modern, West African, Flamenco, ballet, hip hop, tap, aerial silk, salsa, and acting under the mentorship of Debbie Allen. Ms. Dolphin began her professional career in NY as a founding member of Ballet Hispanico Dos. She later spent four years with Ronald K. Brown/

EVIDENCE. She has worked with artists Madonna, Janet Jackson, Beyonce, Cardi B, and more. In 2019, she performed the Dream Ballet solo in the Broadway musical *Oklahoma!* She has choreographed for Miguel, Lauren Jauregui, Kali Uchis, and Lenny Kravitz, and for international brands such as Citibank and i-D. In 2020, Ms. Day made her directorial debut with a short film in collaboration with acclaimed composer Raven Bush. She seeks to amplify universal truths, in hopes that her art ignites the remembrance of the internal freedom of greater consciousness that awaits us all. But first, LOVE. Ms. Dolphin joined the Company in 2023.

WHO'S WHO IN THE COMPANY



SOLOMON DUMAS

(Chicago, IL) (he, him, his) was introduced to dance through AileyCamp. He later began his formal training at The Chicago Academy for the Arts and the Russell Talbert Dance Studio, where he received his most influential training. Mr. Dumas studied at New World School of the Arts and was

a Fellowship Level 1 student at The Ailey School. He has performed with companies including Garth Fagan Dance; Ronald K. Brown/Evidence, A Dance Company; and Labyrinth Dance Theater. Mr. Dumas was a member of Ailey II and joined the Company in 2016. Instagram: @solemn_on



SAMANTHA FIGGINS

(Washington, D.C.) began dancing at Duke Ellington School of the Arts under the tutelage of Charles Auggins and Sandra Fortune-Greene and attended summer intensives at Dance Theatre of Harlem under Arthur Mitchell. She continued her education at SUNY Purchase Conservatory of Dance,

performing works by George Balanchine, Bill T. Jones, Paul Taylor, and Twyla Tharp. Upon graduating cum laude, Ms. Figgins became a member of Complexions Contemporary Ballet, performing works by Dwight Rhoden, Jae Man Joo, and Camille A. Brown. She performed at the 2014 DanceOpen Festival in St. Petersburg, Russia. Ms. Figgins was featured both on the cover of Dance Spirit magazine and in Pointe magazine's "10 Careers to Watch". She has worked with Beyoncé and in the film *Enemy Within* alongside Tiler Peck and Matthew Rushing. Ms. Figgins had the pleasure of performing with Judith Jamison for TEDTalk 2019. Ms. Figgins joined the Company in 2014. Follow her on Instagram @sfigg_udigg.



JAMES GILMER

(Pittsburgh, PA) trained at Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School and the Pittsburgh Creative and Performing Arts School. After graduating, he performed with Texture Contemporary Ballet and joined Cincinnati Ballet in 2011. While dancing with the Cincinnati Ballet for six seasons,

Mr. Gilmer was promoted to Soloist in 2015 and performed works by Victoria Morgan, Amy Seiwert, Septime Webre, Ohad Naharin, Val Caniparoli, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, Edwaard Liang, Jennifer Archibald, and George Balanchine, to name a few. Mr. Gilmer was also a member of Amy Seiwert's Imagery, performing during the summer seasons since 2013, and ODC/dance, performing works by Brenda Way, KT Nelson, and Kate Weare. Mr. Gilmer performed in New York City Center's celebrations of Twyla Tharp in 2021 and 2022, as well as in Fall for Dance, featured in choreography by Jamar Roberts. Mr. Gilmer joined the Company in 2019. Instagram: @james.agilmer



VERNARD J. GILMORE

(Chicago, IL) began his training at Curie Performing and Creative Arts High School in Chicago under Diane Holda. He later studied at the Joseph Holmes Chicago Dance Theater with Harriet Ross, Marquita Levy, and Emily Stein. He received first place in the all-city NAACP ACT- SO

competition in 1993. He attended Barat College under scholarship and tutelage of Rory Foster and Eileen Cropley. He then studied as a scholarship student at The Ailey School and was a member of Ailey II. In 2010 he performed as part of the White House Dance Series. Mr. Gilmore is a choreographer whose work has been a part of the Ailey Dancers Resource Fund, Fire Island Dance Festival 2008, and Jazz Foundation of America Gala 2010, and he produced the *Dance Of Light* project in 2010 and 2015. An excerpt of Mr. Gilmore's work *La Mulette* was performed in 2017 as part of the "Celebrating the Men of Ailey" program. Nimbus Dance Works performed a new work by Mr. Gilmore in 2018. Mr. Gilmore is a certified Zena Rommett Floor-Barre instructor. He teaches workshops and master classes around the world. Mr. Gilmore joined the Company in 1997.

WHO'S WHO IN THE COMPANY



ASHLEY KAYLYNN GREEN

(Charleston, SC) began her training at Columbia City Jazz where she found her love for dance. She trained in a variety of styles including ballet, modern, jazz, tap, and hip-hop. In 2020, Ms. Green received her BFA in Dance from Point Park University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, under the direction of Garfield Lemonius. There, she performed works by Peter Chu, Azure Barton, Kyle Abraham, and Darrell Grand Moultrie. After graduation she joined Whim W'Him Seattle Contemporary Dance where she received a Princess Grace Award in Dance. Ms. Green joined the Company in 2021 and that year was named one of "25 to Watch" by *Dance Magazine*.



JACQUELIN HARRIS

(Charlotte, NC) began her dance training at Dance Productions Studios under the direction of Lori Long. Ms. Harris received a silver ARTS award from the National Foundation for the Advancement of the Arts and was a Presidential Scholar in the Arts semifinalist. She graduated with honors from the Ailey/Fordham BFA Program in Dance. In 2016 Ms. Harris was named one of "25 to Watch" by *Dance Magazine*. She received a 2017 dance fellowship from the Princess Grace Foundation-USA. In 2019 she was one of 75 dancers across the world to perform in Merce Cunningham's *Night of 100 Solos: A Centennial Event*, which won a New York Dance and Performance "Bessie" Award. In 2021 Ms. Harris worked with Twyla Tharp in her production of *Twyla Now* alongside artists of New York City Ballet and American Ballet Theatre. She was a member of Ailey II and joined the Company in 2014.



MICHAEL JACKSON, JR.

(New Orleans, LA) began his dance training at age 14 at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Washington, D.C., under the direction of Charles Augins. He became a member of Dance Theatre of Harlem Dancing through Barriers Ensemble in 2005. In 2006 he joined Dallas Black Dance Theatre, and in 2008 joined PHILADANCO!, where he also worked as artistic director of D3. Mr. Jackson joined the Company in 2011 and rejoined in 2015.



YAZZMEEN LAIDLER

(Miami, FL) graduated from New World School of the Arts. She trained at Traci Young-Bryon's Young Contemporary Dance Theatre and The Ailey School summer intensive. Ms. Laidler received her BFA from The University of the Arts and was a company member of Eleone Dance Theatre. Ms. Laidler is the 2016 award-winning Pennsylvania Choreographer, setting work for Pennsylvania Ballet II. She has performed works by Dwight Rhoden, Camille A. Brown, Rennie Harris, and Azure Barton, among others. She has performed as a guest artist with Owen/Cox Dance and is a former member of Ailey II. She is the founder of Time Revealed Dance Intensive in Miami, FL, which brings highly acclaimed artists to aid in the cultivation of community for aspiring dancers. Ms. Laidler joined the company in 2018. Instagram : @yazzmeen.laidler

WHO'S WHO IN THE COMPANY



YANNICK LEBRUN

(Cayenne, French Guiana) began training in his native country at the Adaclam School under the guidance of Jeanine Verin. After graduating high school in 2004, he moved to New York City to study at The Ailey School as a scholarship student. Mr. Lebrun was named one of *Dance Magazine's* "25

to Watch" in 2011, and in 2013 *France-Amérique* magazine highlighted him as one of the 50 most talented French people in the United States. In November 2016 Mr. Lebrun was a guest performer with The Royal Ballet in Wayne McGregor's *Chroma*. In 2019 he choreographed *Saa Magni*, his first work for Ailey II, and in 2021 he created *Lora* for ABT Studio Company. Mr. Lebrun was a member of Ailey II and joined the Company in 2008. Instagram: @yannicklebrun



XAVIER MACK

(Washington, D.C.) began his dance training at Divine Dance Institute in Capitol Heights, Maryland. He received his B.A. in Modern Language & Linguistics from the University of Maryland-Baltimore County (UMBC). In 2017, Mr. Mack joined Dallas Black

Dance Theatre where he performed works by Hope Boykin, Norbert De La Cruz III, Dianne McIntyre, and Matthew Rushing. Mr. Mack joined the Company in 2022.



RENALDO MAURICE

(Gary, IN) began his training with Tony Washington and graduated from Talent Unlimited High School. He attended Emerson School for Visual and Performing Arts, studying with Larry Brewer. Mr. Maurice was a scholarship student at The Ailey

School, Ballet Chicago, Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, and Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance. He received second place in modern dance from the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts and received the Dizzy Feet Foundation Scholarship. In 2012 he was honored with the key to the city of his hometown. Mr. Maurice has choreographed and performed with Grammy nominated artist Jazzmeia Horn. He is the 2022 Willie Ninja Supreme Award Recipient and star of HBO Max's *Legendary*. He has also incorporated his passion for the arts with social responsibility as the co-artistic director of Indiana's South Shore Dance Alliance. He was a member of Ailey II and joined the Company in 2011. Facebook: @Maurice Gardner. Instagram: @mauricerenaldo



ASHLEY MAYEUX

(Houston, TX) began her dance training at the High School for Performing and Visual Arts and graduated cum laude with a BFA from SUNY Purchase. Ms. Mayeux continued her studies at the Dance Theatre of Harlem and went on to perform in the tour of the Broadway musical *Aida*. She has been

featured in publications including *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Pointe Magazine*, and *Dance Magazine*. Ms. Mayeux was a member of Complexions Contemporary Ballet from 2012 to 2016, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater from 2016 to 2018, and Alonzo King LINES Ballet from 2018-2021. She rejoined the Ailey company in 2021. Instagram: @Courtesy_ofhtwn

WHO'S WHO IN THE COMPANY



CORRIN RACHELLE MITCHELL

(Baltimore, MD) began her dance training in her hometown at LeRe's Performing Arts Center, owned by her mother and father. She attended Baltimore School for the Arts where she trained with Norma Pera and Linda-Denise Fisher-Harrell. Ms. Mitchell graduated in 2017 with a BFA in Dance

from Point Park University where she worked with choreographers Troy Powell, Garfield Lemonius, and Debbie Allen. After completing one year of apprenticeship, Ms. Mitchell joined Ailey II in 2017 where she performed works choreographed by Uri Sands, Bradley Shelver, Troy Powell, Robert Battle, Darrell Grand Moultrie, and Amy Hall Garner. Ms. Mitchell joined the Company in 2019. Instagram: @_slimrin_



CHALVAR MONTEIRO

(Montclair, NJ) began training at Sharron Miller's Academy for the Performing Arts and studied at The Ailey School before receiving his BFA in Dance from SUNY Purchase. Mr. Monteiro has worked with Sidra Bell Dance New York, Elisa Monte Dance, Keigwin+Company, BODYTRAFFIC, and

A.I.M by Kyle Abraham. He assisted Kyle Abraham in setting and creating work for Ailey, Barnard College, Princeton University, Emory University, NYU Tisch School of the Arts, and New York City Ballet. In 2019, Mr. Monteiro was selected to participate in Merce Cunningham *Trust's Night of 100 Solos: A Centennial Event*. His choreography has been presented in Ailey's 2021 Virtual Spirit Gala, as well as at festivals and institutions across the country. Mr. Monteiro has been featured in *Vogue Beauty*, *Document Journal* for Moncler, and fashion campaigns for Uniqlo and Lululemon. He was a member of Ailey II and joined the Company in 2015. Instagram: @chlvrmntro



ALISHA RENA PEEK

(Upper Marlboro, MD), a graduate of the Ailey/Fordham BFA Program and former member of Ailey II, began her formal dance training at the Washington School of Ballet. Ms. Peek attended Kirov Ballet Academy, participated in the Dance Theatre of Harlem Kennedy Center Residency,

and studied at The Art of Technique. Professionally, Ms. Peek has had the opportunity to work with influential choreographers such as Robert Battle, Hope Boykin, Andrea Miller, Darrell Grand Moultrie, Kirven Douthit-Boyd, Juel D. Lane, and others. She has taught at The Ailey School and various studios in the Maryland/Virginia area. Recently, she served as an assistant to Milton Myers and personal assistant to Hope Boykin. She participated in the HopeBoykinDance Bubble Residency and performed in *An Evening of Hope* and *Moments by Hope*. Ms. Peek has appeared in the FX hit series *POSE* and choreographed a short film produced by Beats by Dre.



MIRANDA QUINN

(Baltimore, MD) trained in various genres of dance from the ages of 2 to 18 at Mid-Atlantic Center for the Performing Arts under the artistic direction of Shannon Torres. Ms. Quinn graduated from The Juilliard School in 2019 under the newly appointed direction of Alicia Graf Mack. Her

attendance at the school was made possible by the Jerome L. Greene Fellowship. She is an alum of the Springboard Danse Montréal, Arts Umbrella, and Hubbard Street Dance Chicago summer intensives. She joined the Company in 2019. Ms. Quinn is beyond thrilled and honored to be a part of the Ailey family and legacy. Instagram: @mirandaming4

WHO'S WHO IN THE COMPANY



HANNAH ALISSA RICHARDSON

(Toronto, Ontario Canada) graduated with honors from The Ailey School Certificate Program. Ms. Richardson has performed works by choreographers including Ray Mercer, Bradley Shelver, Kirven Douthit-Boyd, Earl Mosley, William Forsythe, and Robert Battle. She has been a featured

dancer in festivals including Jacob's Pillow and the Holland Dance Festival, and had the honor of performing the world premiere of *Grace and Mercy* choreographed by Ronald K. Brown at Bard's SummerScape festival. Some of her film and television credits include Orion Pictures' *Every Day* and Disney Channel's *Backstage*. Ms. Richardson was a proud member of Ailey II for one season before joining the Company in 2022. She is also a guest artist with Ronald K. Brown/EVIDENCE, A Dance Company. Ms. Richardson is thrilled to be part of Ailey and is grateful for all those who've continued to support her along her journey. Instagram: @hannahxrichardson



DEIDRE ROGAN

(Fort Myers, FL) began her dance training in Fort Myers, Florida under Melinda Roy, Roberto Munoz, and Cheryl Copeland. Deidre graduated with honors from the Ailey/Fordham BFA Program in Dance in 2015. She is a YoungArts scholarship winner, performed as a United States Arts

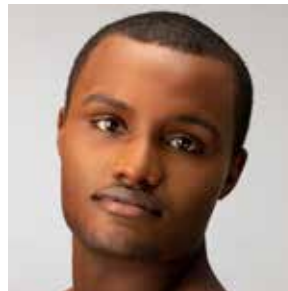
Ambassador for President Barack Obama during the Opening Ceremony of the Hannover Messe, and was the Associate Choreographer under Choreographer Hope Boykin for the City Center Encores Off-Center production of *Promenade* in 2019. Deidre danced with Ailey II from 2014 to 2016 and with Parsons Dance from 2016 to 2022. This is her second season with the Company. Instagram: @deidre_rogan



CONSTANCE STAMATIOU

(Charlotte, NC) began her dance training at Pat Hall's Dance Unlimited and North Carolina Dance Theatre under the direction of Salvatore Aiello. She graduated from Northwest School of the Arts and studied at SUNY Purchase and as a Fellowship student at The Ailey School. In

2009 Ms. Stamatiou received the Leonore Annenberg Fellowship in the performing and visual arts. She has performed at the White House Dance Series, in a TED Talk with Judith Jamison, and as a guest performer on *So You Think You Can Dance*, *Dancing with the Stars*, Logo's *Trailblazer Honors*, *Good Morning America* and *The Today Show*. Ms. Stamatiou has danced in the films *Shake Rattle & Roll* and *Dan Pritzker's Bolden* and the commercial *I Love NY*. She is a mother of two. Ms. Stamatiou was a member of Ailey II, joined the Company in 2007, and rejoined in 2016. Instagram: @constance.stamatiou



CHRISTOPHER TAYLOR

(Newark, NJ) is a graduate of Arts High School and his dance education began at age 11 in AileyCamp, a six-week full scholarship summer program offered to students in 10 cities nationwide. He continued training in The Ailey School's Junior Division and later on scholarship in the Professional Division. Mr. Taylor

has performed at the Apollo Theater, Lincoln Center, in Ailey's New York galas, and was a member of Ailey II for two seasons. He joined the Company in 2022

WHO'S WHO IN THE COMPANY



DE'ANTHONY VAUGHAN

(Kansas City, MO) was introduced to dance at the age of three by his grandmother. He received his training from AileyCamp, Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey, and Kansas City Ballet School. He continued his training in New York City at The Ailey School as a scholarship student. In 2014 Mr.

Vaughan joined Dallas Black Dance Theatre and has performed works by Matthew Rushing, Darrell Grand Moultrie, Kirven Douthit-Boyd, Alvin Ailey, Elisa Monte, Donald McKayle, and many more. This is Mr. Vaughan's first season with the Company. Instagram: @leedeevaughan



JERMAINE TERRY

(Washington, D.C.) began dancing at James Dance Center in Kissimmee, Florida. He graduated cum laude with a BFA from the University of South Florida, where he received scholarships for excellence in performance and choreography, and the Distinguished Alumnus Award for outstanding service

to the arts. Mr. Terry has performed with Ailey II, Buglisi Dance Theatre, Arch Dance, Dance Iquail, PHILADANCO!, and as a guest artist on the TV show *So You Think You Can Dance*. He has designed costumes for New York City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Miami City Ballet, and PHILADANCO! among others, and was nominated for a NY Emmy for his collaboration with The Black Iris Project, *WILD: Bird of Paradise*. His evening wear designs have appeared online in *Vogue* and *Essence* and have been photographed by the late Bill Cunningham for the style section of *The New York Times*. Mr. Terry joined the Company in 2010. Instagram: @jerms83



ISABEL WALLACE GREEN

(Houston, TX) began her dance training at Houston Ballet Academy. She graduated summa cum laude from the Ailey/Fordham BFA Program with a dual degree in Dance and African/African American Studies. Ms. Wallace-Green performed with New Chamber Ballet, Urban Souls Dance Company, and was

an ensemble member of *The Radio City Christmas Spectacular*. She joined DBDT: Encore! before becoming a company member with Dallas Black Dance Theatre. While there, she performed works by Hope Boykin, Darrell Grand Moultrie, Rennie Harris, Elisa Monte, and Matthew Rushing. In 2021, Ms. Wallace-Green partnered with University of Houston and Texas Southern University art museums to premiere her first solo show titled *Resilience*. She joined the Company in 2023.



CHRISTOPHER R. WILSON

(Augusta, GA) is a graduate of John S. Davidson Fine Arts Magnet School and graduated cum laude from the Ailey/Fordham BFA Program in Dance. He trained at Colton Ballet School, Alonzo King LINES Ballet, and The School at Jacob's Pillow. He began his professional career with

BHdos, the second company of Ballet Hispánico, and has performed for Queen Sofía of Spain and Princess Beatrix of the Netherlands. He has had the privilege of performing on the main stage of the 2017 *Essence Festival* in New Orleans. Mr. Wilson has performed works by choreographers Judith Jamison, Matthew Rushing, Wayne McGregor, Camille A. Brown, Kyle Abraham, and Emily Molnar, among others. He has been a guest artist with The Black Iris Project and for the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival. Mr. Wilson was a member of Ailey II and joined the Company in 2018. www.christopherrwilson.com. Instagram: @christopher.r.wilson

AILEY MILESTONES

1958 – Alvin Ailey, who believed passionately that “dance belongs to everyone,” and a group of young black dancers **perform for the first time** as members of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater at New York’s 92nd Street Y.

1960 – Alvin Ailey choreographs his classic masterpiece *Revelations*, which brings international acclaim. During the organization’s first 10 years, Ailey created 20 new ballets; during his lifetime, he choreographed 79 ballets.

1962 – AAADT is chosen to go on an extensive tour to the Far East, Southeast Asia and Australia as part of President John F. Kennedy’s progressive “President’s Special International Program for Cultural Presentations.”

1965 – Judith Jamison joins Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and becomes widely recognized as an international dance star.

1967 – AAADT embarks on a 3-month, 10-country **African Tour** for the State Department.

1968 – AAADT performs for President Johnson at the White House.

1969 – Alvin Ailey founds The Ailey School.

1970 – AAADT’s second State Department-sponsored tour of North Africa and Europe. AAADT also tours the USSR – the first visit by an American modern dance company since the days of Isadora Duncan. *The Washington Post* reports that the Company was kept onstage for 20 minutes of curtain calls after a sold-out opening night in Moscow.

1971 – Alvin Ailey choreographs *Cry* for Judith Jamison as a birthday present to his mother. *Cry* becomes an instant hit, bringing even greater popularity to Mr. Ailey as a choreographer and Ms. Jamison as a dancer.

1974 – Ailey II is founded to develop young artists and new dance audiences.

CBS airs “Ailey Celebrates Ellington,” Alvin Ailey’s dance tribute to the American jazz legend.

1977 – AAADT performs at the inaugural gala for President Jimmy Carter at the White House.

1982 – Alvin Ailey receives the United Nations Peace Medal.

1983 – AAADT celebrates its 25th anniversary with an anniversary benefit *The New York Times* calls “the biggest celebration of all” and further proclaims that “The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is not just a company, it is a school of thought.”

1985 – AAADT is the first modern dance company to go on a US government-sponsored tour of the People’s Republic of China since the normalization of Sino-American relations.

1988 – Alvin Ailey receives The Kennedy Center Honors for Lifetime Contributions to American Culture through the Performing Arts and New York’s City’s highest cultural honor – the Handel Medallion.

1989 – Upon Alvin Ailey’s death and at his request, Judith Jamison is named Artistic Director. Under her leadership, the company flourishes, building an unparalleled reputation for performance, education, and innovation.

Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey is founded and subsequently launches the Company’s national AileyCamp program.

1991 – AileyCamp established in New York City. This program is successfully replicated in cities nationwide and continues to inspire thousands of inner-city youth.



AILEY MILESTONES

1994 – AAADT performs at the televised inaugural gala for President Bill Clinton, seen by 80 million viewers, and was featured on The Phil Donahue Show, reaching 18 million viewers.

Judith Jamison's autobiography, *Dancing Spirit*, edited by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, is published by Doubleday.

Ailey in the Park attracts 30,000 spectators, who congregate in New York City's Central Park to see the live performance.

1995 – Judith Jamison and the Company are featured in a commercial broadcast on the Academy Awards and Super Bowl telecasts as part of a very successful American Express ad campaign. Advertising Age calls it “the campaign of the decade.”

1996 – Jennifer Dunning's loving, biographic tribute, *Alvin Ailey: A Life in Dance*, is published by Addison Wesley.

1997 – Historic AAADT residency in **South Africa**, signaling the end to a long cultural boycott of the old apartheid regime by the world performing arts community.

1998 – The Ailey organization pioneers its new **B.F.A. program** – a joint venture between the Ailey and **Fordham University**, which offers students a unique opportunity to receive both superb dance training and a superior liberal arts education.

1999 – **Judith Jamison receives The Kennedy Center Honors** for Lifetime Contributions to American Culture through the Performing Arts.

Orlando Bagwell's documentary *“A Hymn for Alvin Ailey”* is broadcast nationally on PBS' Great Performances, inspired by Judith Jamison's work *Hymn*, her powerful tribute to Alvin Ailey, in collaboration with Tony nominee Anna Deavere Smith. Judith Jamison wins a Prime Time Emmy Award in the category of Outstanding Choreography.

2002 – President George W. Bush awards **the 2001 National Medal of Arts to both Judith Jamison and the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation**. The Foundation is the first dance organization in history to be given this prestigious award and it is the first time ever that an arts organization and its artistic director have been recognized independently for this honor.

Judith Jamison carries the Olympic torch in Salt Lake City, UT prior to the opening of the **2002 Winter Olympics**. AAADT performs Jamison's *HERE...NOW*, commissioned for the Olympic Arts Festival.

2003 – AAADT performs at the **White House State Dinner** honoring President Mwai Kibaki of Kenya.

2004 – The United States Postal Service issues a **first class postage stamp honoring Alvin Ailey** as part of the American Choreographers stamp series, which commemorates four visionary 20th century choreographers who left a profound mark on the language of dance.

2005 – The Ailey organization celebrates the official **opening and public dedication of its new home, The Joan Weill Center for Dance**, New York City's largest building dedicated to dance.

AAADT **returns to Russia**, becoming the only American company to perform in the Stars of the White Nights Festival and the first modern dance company presented at the legendary Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg.

Launch of The Ailey Extension, a new program for the general public that offers “real classes for real people” with a variety of techniques taught morning, noon and night.



AILEY MILESTONES

2006 – The Library of Congress announces the donation of the Ailey archives to “the nation’s library,” which will preserve the materials, digitize them and make them more widely available to future generations. According to Librarian of Congress James H. Billington, it is “...a major achievement for the Library.”

PBS Dance in America’s *Beyond the Steps: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater*, which chronicles the 2005 tour to Russia, the Ailey organization’s move into its new home and the creation of the acclaimed ballet *Love Stories*, premieres.

2007 – AAADT is featured on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and the season opening of *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*.

2008 – The Ailey organization launches its **50th anniversary celebration** with 18 months of special performances, projects and events, including: The Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. opens the exhibit *Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater: 50 Years as Cultural Ambassador to the World*. AAADT is the first concert dance company to perform on *ABC’s Dancing With the Stars* and FOX’s *So You Think You Can Dance*. The Ailey organization creates special commemorative merchandise in celebration of the 50th anniversary including a **Barbie® Doll**, **Hallmark greeting cards**, a **Movado Museum Timepiece**, and a **photographic art book *Ailey Ascending: A Portrait in Motion*** by renowned photographer Andrew Eccles. Ailey holds **free summer performances in all five boroughs** of New York City, including a street party on 55th street in front of New York City Center. An estimated 40,000 people attend one of these events. AAADT launches its five-week 50th Anniversary Season at New York City Center with a **Golden Anniversary Gala** with Honorary Chair Oprah Winfrey. The season includes special live performances with Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and Sweet Honey in the Rock. The US Congress passes a resolution naming Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater a vital American “**Cultural Ambassador to the World.**”

2009 – AAADT kicks off its **50th Anniversary U.S. Tour** to 26 cities in Washington, D.C. where President Obama and the First Family attend a performance at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

2010 – Tracy Inman and Melanie Person become co-directors of **The Ailey School**, succeeding the late Denise Jefferson, who led the School for about 25 years.

First Lady Michelle Obama honors Ms. Jamison at The White House Dance Series: *A Tribute to Judith Jamison*, celebrating her career as an American dancer, choreographer and Artistic Director of the Company for the past 20 years.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg presents Judith Jamison with highest honor awarded by the City of New York – the Handel Medallion for distinguished achievement in the arts.

2011 – During Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater’s 2011 International Tour **Judith Jamison passes the mantle of Artistic Director to Robert Battle on July 1, 2011**. He becomes only the third person in the Company’s history to hold that position.

Robert Battle initiates a major new program: The **New Directions Choreography Lab**, designed to serve the entire field of dance. Assisting choreographers in developing their work, the program will grant resident fellowships to four emerging and mid-career artists each year, offering a stipend, the use of gifted dancers from The Ailey School, creative mentorships and rehearsal time at The Joan Weill Center for Dance.

AileyCamp Newark launches to provide at-risk youth ages 11-14 with activities that build self-esteem, encourage creative expression, and impart life skills such as goal-setting, self-discipline, and teamwork. AileyCamps operate in ten sites, and engage nearly 1,000 young people across the country: Atlanta, GA; Berkeley/Oakland, CA; Boston, MA; Bridgeport, CT; Chicago, IL; Kansas City, KS; Kansas City, MO; Miami, FL; Newark, NJ; New York City.



AILEY MILESTONES

10-year agreement announced with New York City Center designating Ailey as the venue's Principal Dance Company and providing financial support for the creation of one new dance work for the Company's performances at the landmark theater during each of the next ten seasons.

The U.S. Senate passes a resolution recognizing the artistic and cultural contributions of AAADT and the 50th Anniversary of the first performance of Alvin Ailey's masterwork, *Revelations*. Authored by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, and co-sponsored by Senators Charles E. Schumer and Robert Menendez, this resolution honors *Revelations* as a timeless classic "beloved by people around the world" with universal themes "that illustrate the strength and humanity within all of us."

2012 – Launch of the Ailey Legacy Residency – a new lecture, technique and repertory program for college-level students looks definitively into the history and creative heritage of Alvin Ailey – led by Sylvia Waters, who steps down from Artistic Director of Ailey II after 38 years.

Ailey board appoints Bennett Rink as the new Executive Director of Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, succeeding Sharon Gersten Luckman, who planned to step down in January 2013 after over two decades with the organization.

2013 – An historic engagement at Lincoln Center, for the first time in 13 years, **launches 2013-14 season led by Robert Battle**, which also includes visits to Brazil and Argentina and a record-breaking five-week engagement at New York City Center. **Ailey II's first New York season** also breaks box office records.

2014 – Another record-breaking New York City Center Season: for the second consecutive year, **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater broke New York City Center season box office records**—nearly 70,000 audience members attend a total of 39 performances during the five-week engagement from December 4, 2013 to January 5, 2014.

Ailey II celebrated its 40th anniversary, Performing for approximately 40,000 people in 33 cities worldwide, including five cities across France, Germany, Poland and Luxembourg, and 28 cities in the United States and Canada.

Robert Battle visits the White House to accept from President Obama the **Presidential Medal of Freedom**, the country's highest civilian honor posthumously awarded to Alvin Ailey in recognition of his contributions to civil rights and dance in America.

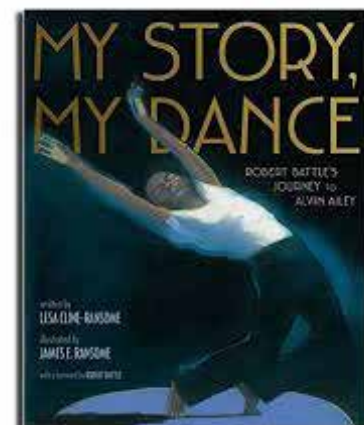
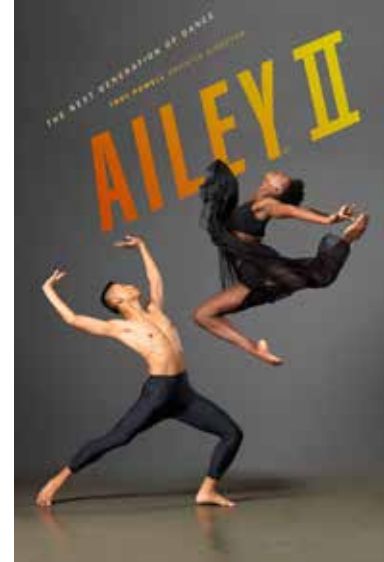
2015 – Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater makes an historic return to South Africa after nearly 20 years, performing in Johannesburg and Cape Town, and leading workshops, master classes, and lecture demonstrations in over two dozen schools, universities, and community centers.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater makes its national cinema debut as part of **"Lincoln Center at the Movies: Great American Dance."** Shown on approximately 600 screens across the country, the film includes *Chroma* by Wayne McGregor, *Grace* by Ronald K. Brown, *Takademe* by Robert Battle, and Alvin Ailey's masterpiece *Revelations*, along with a rare look behind the scenes and exclusive interviews with the artists.

Simon & Schuster publishes ***MY STORY, MY DANCE: Robert Battle's Journey to Alvin Ailey***, an inspiring children's book based on Mr. Battle's life. His landmark year continues with the December debut of *Awakening*, his first world premiere since becoming Artistic Director.

2016 – Judith Jamison's contributions to dance are celebrated at a White House Black History Month event hosted by First Lady Michelle Obama.

AileyCamp expands to ten cities nationwide, including Atlanta, GA; Baltimore, MD; Berkeley/Oakland, CA; Chicago, IL; Kansas City, KS; Kansas City, MO; Miami, FL; New York, NY; Newark, NJ; and Seattle/Tacoma, WA.



AILEY MILESTONES

First Lady Michelle Obama recognizes AileyCamp Miami with the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award for being one of the country's best after-school and out-of-school-time creative youth development programs using engagement in the arts and the humanities to increase academic achievement, graduation rates, and college enrollment.

2016 – Jamar Roberts was awarded a 2016 New York Dance and Performance “Bessie” Award for Sustained Achievement **“for impeccably representing the traditional values of classic modern dance while forging new paths with his sublime artistry, technical precision, and passionate presence with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.”**

2017 – Ailey kicks off the pilot year of **Destination Dance Ailey Atlanta**, an initiative that leverages Ailey's unique position as the nation's largest culturally diverse dance company to engage audiences, artists, teachers, and students in innovative ways throughout Atlanta, Georgia, in partnership with various cultural, educational, and civic organizations such as The Center for Civil and Human Rights, Atlanta Ballet and High Museum of Art.

Ailey launches its **newest curriculum initiative, *Night Creature: An Imaginative Journey Through Dance***, a program for elementary-age youth in 3rd through 5th grades based on the study of Alvin Ailey's *Night Creature*, a fusion of Ailey's buoyant choreography and Duke Ellington's sparkling music, using imaginative thinking to provide connections to music, visual arts, social studies, science, and literacy.

Logo Trailblazer Honors recognizes Alvin Ailey as pioneer who bravely fought for equality. Tribute aired nationally on Logo and VHL.

Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation opens The Elaine Wynn & Family Education Wing, a 10,000-square-foot expansion of Ailey's permanent home, The Joan Weill Center for Dance – New York City's largest building dedicated to dance. Designed by The Center's original architects, lu + Bibliowicz Architects, The Elaine Wynn & Family Education Wing adds three floors to the west side of Ailey's building to provide four additional dance studios, two new flexible classrooms, and added administrative office space

Ailey's Artistic Director Emerita, Judith Jamison, was inducted in November 2017 into the Crain's Hall of Fame, which **honors business leaders who have transformed New York City** in their professional work and in their civic and philanthropic activities.

Veteran Ailey company member **Linda Celeste Sims** was a **2017 recipient of the Dance Magazine Award**.

Ailey dancer **Jacquelin Harris** was a **2017 recipient of the Princess Grace Dance Performance Award**.

2018 – In honor of hometown native Jamar Roberts and the Miami premiere of his work *Members Don't Get Weary*, the Miami-Dade County Commission presented him with proclamation declaring February 22, 2018 as **Jamar Roberts Day**. Roberts was also presented with a **Key to the City**.

Ailey II performed at the opening ceremony of the National Museum for Peace and Justice, the nation's first comprehensive memorial dedicated to racial terror lynchings of African-Americans and the legacy of slavery and racial inequality in America, and the **Legacy Museum** in Montgomery, AL in April.



AILEY MILESTONES

2018 – Ailey believes the transformative power of dance is applicable for all ages and developed the **AileyDance for Active Aging** program specifically for people age 60 and older, emphasizing the importance of strength training and mobility through movement while providing an outlet for artistic expression for elderly populations. Pilot residencies were hosted by New Settlement Community Center in the Bronx, and Union Settlement, James Lenox House, and Carnegie East House in Upper Manhattan.

BET and BLACK GIRLS ROCK!™ honor Judith Jamison with the **Living Legend Award** on national telecast which featured a special performance of *Cry* danced by Company dancer Jacqueline Green.

Heinemann Publishers created a **Guided Reading Book** for 1st and 2nd grade students about the **Ailey Athletic Boys Dance program**, which are being distributed to schools nationwide beginning in the fall of 2018.

The Ailey organization honors Mr. Ailey's pioneering legacy with a **60th Anniversary celebration** titled **Ailey Ascending**. The celebration consists of an international tour, a Choreography Unlocked festival of performance, conversation and master classes, expands to include exceptional discussions and legacy panels at partner institutions throughout New York City, and reaches a high point with a momentous New York City Center Season of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, which features the company's first two-act ballet, *Lazarus*, created by the organization's inaugural artist-in-residence Rennie Harris.

2019 – The **Ailey Spirit Gala** launched The Ailey School 50th anniversary celebration, with a special performance featuring students of all ages. To honor the milestone, **one hundred students from the School performed Alvin Ailey's Revelations** in the 93rd Annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

Acclaimed company member **Jamar Roberts** is named **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's first ever Resident Choreographer** and premieres *Ode*, a powerful and personal meditation on the beauty and fragility of life in a time of growing gun violence. The New York Times praised "his sensuous, full bodied choreography," and noted that "[*Ode's*] honesty says something hopeful about the present and future of this company."

The Company celebrates beloved **Associate Artistic Director Masazumi Chaya's final New York City Center season** with a special performance program after nearly four decades with the Company and took on a new role as **Director of the Alvin Ailey Choreographic Legacy Project**. Mr. Chaya is honored with the prestigious **2019 Dance Magazine Award**, lauded by the magazine as "a diplomat and a direct connection to the Ailey legacy."

2020 – In January, the Company welcomes **Matthew Rushing** into the role of **Associate Artistic Director**, after serving as Rehearsal Director and Guest Artist since 2010 and inspiring Ailey audiences since 1992 with performances that led him to be praised as one of the great male dancers on the American stage.

Since the launch of **Ailey All Access** in March 2020, Ailey has reached **over 46 million people in 121 countries** globally with free streaming of full-length ballets from the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and Ailey II repertory for the first time, along with classes, conversations and original short films created by the Ailey dancers. Ailey All Access won TimeOut New York's "Time In" Archive Treasure award for best archival streaming series and outlets like Vogue and Dance Magazine included works by Ailey artists on their "Best Of" lists for dance films created during the pandemic.



AILEY MILESTONES

2020 – Ailey's first virtual season, *Ailey Forward*, reached over 717,000 viewers, with eight unique programs from December 2-31. **Two dance films were created and premiered: *A Jam Session for Troubling Times*** by Resident Choreographer Jamar Roberts and *Testament*, a collaboration between Associate Artistic Director Matthew Rushing, Clifton Brown and Yusha-Marie Sorzano, in honor of the 60th anniversary of Ailey's classic Revelations.

2021 – Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater marks the **50th anniversary of Alvin Ailey's signature solo *Cry***, with the streaming of a new video adaptation in May. Choreographed on Artistic Director Emerita Judith Jamison as a birthday present for his mother, Mr. Ailey dedicated the enduring work of American art to "all Black women everywhere—especially our mothers"

In January, director Jamila Wignot's **powerful AILEY documentary premiered at the prestigious Sundance Film Festival** heralded as a must-see and later in June a Tribeca Film Festival critics pick. This resonant biography of trailblazer Alvin Ailey is told through Ailey's own words, along with interviews with those close to him, and featured evocative archival footage and rarely seen historic performances. In early 2022, the national television broadcast premiere of the acclaimed documentary opened the 36th season of *PBS American Masters*.

Internationally renowned performer, choreographer, director and multidisciplinary artist **Francesca Harper is appointed Ailey II Artistic Director**, alongside **Rehearsal Director Lakey Evans-Peña**. Ms. Harper's personal connections with Ailey are deeply rooted, as she received training at The Ailey School while her mother, the late Denise Jefferson directed the program from 1984-2010. She will curate and oversee all aspects of the Company's artistic and educational initiatives while honoring the traditions, legacy and creative spirit of Alvin Ailey.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater participated in Lincoln Center's first annual **BAAND Together Dance Festival** August 17-21, a celebration of dance that joined together New York City's iconic dance companies **Ballet Hispánico, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, American Ballet Theatre, New York City Ballet, and Dance Theatre of Harlem**, to share the spotlight and stage for the first time.

The Ailey Organization celebrated **Artistic Director Robert Battle's 10th anniversary** leading the company forward. Robert Battle was honored with the prestigious **2021 Dance Magazine Award**, lauded by the magazine that "During Battle's tenure, the Ailey brand has remained synonymous with authenticity, artistic integrity, inclusive storytelling and culture of the highest quality. Through his steadfast grace, humility, wit and assiduousness, Battle has helped the Ailey company, 60-plus-years on, to continue evolving, flourishing and growing ever more popular."

September marked the launch of "**Champion Tears**," a dynamic clothing collaboration between Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, artist and creative director of Denim Tears, Tremaine Emory, and the iconic Global sportswear brand, Champion. Influenced by Alvin Ailey who used the power of dance as a weapon for social change, Emory developed unique pieces within the collection to spotlight and celebrate Ailey.

2022 – For the first time, the Ailey organization presented ***Ailey Moves NYC!***, a summer celebration of free outdoor performances, dance classes, and documentary screenings throughout all five boroughs, July 23-August 1, 2022. Featuring Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Ailey II, Ailey Extension, and Ailey Arts In Education programs, the festival delivered dance back to people of all ages across New York City, the cultural capital of the world.



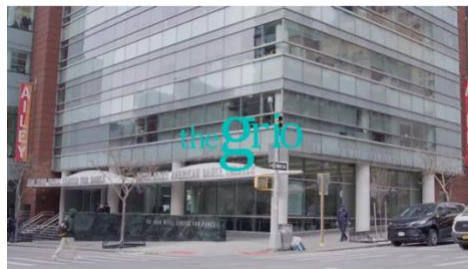
BROADCAST HIGHLIGHTS 2023-24 SEASON



NBC News Now: Legacy of Alvin Ailey Lives on at his New York Dance Theater

The Grio: AILEY Continues to Mold the next Black Dancers of the Future

LIVE with Kelly & Ryan: Ailey's Dancers Performing *Revelations*



ABC7: Ailey Pays Tribute to Judith Jamison for 65th Anniversary

LIVE Kelly & Mark: Hip Hop with Ailey Extension's *Tweet Boogie*

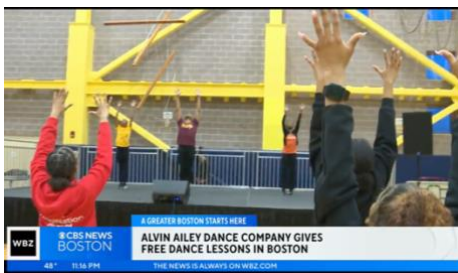
NYC Tourism: "The Freedom to Be" ft. Ailey's Yannick Lebrun & Caroline Dartey



CBS Boston: Alvin Ailey dancers give free community workshop before Boston shows

Tamron Hall Show: Judith Jamison Says AILEY Doc Gives "Intimate Look" at Ailey's Life

TED Talk: "Revelations from a Lifetime in Dance" with Judith Jamison and excerpts of Ailey's classic works *Cry* and *Revelations*



(Click on thumbnail images for full videos)

NPR Morning Edition: "[A dance about gun violence is touring nationally with Alvin Ailey's company](#)" – February 1, 2024

WHAT CRITICS ARE SAYING ABOUT AILEY

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

"The world's most exciting dance company bring the house down"
The Telegraph UK, Mark Monahan – September 6, 2023

"Five Stars: extraordinary soul-stirring dance"
The Guardian, Lyndsey Winship – August 24, 2023

"Five Stars: Work that shines... Vibrant showcase of the breadth of dance styles that make Alvin Ailey's company a must-see... It's always a treat when the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is in town, but this year they may have surpassed themselves."
The Stage UK, Siobhan Murphy – September 12, 2023

"Five Stars. The pioneering company's warmth and athletic grace is showcased in a selection of old and new work. There's something generous about Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. It's there in the dancing – full of skill, passion and a charismatic warmth"
The Guardian, Sarah Crompton – September 10, 2023

"Every arts company posts a mission statement – art, community, blah – but few live their values with the blazing commitment of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater... Holds its place in the conversation about race, belief and community in America"
Evening Standard, David Jays – September 6, 2023

"love the company's infectious joie de vivre, alluring sensuality, sinuous musicality. If you need uplift, go see... They are not to be missed."
British Theatre Guide, Vera Liber – September 6, 2023

"A prayer the whole world continues to need – whether from a lone performer or a whole company, the kind of spiritual uplift Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is sure to bring in early February to Miami's Adrienne Arsht Center, notably in its rousing Revelations."
Miami New Times – January 4, 2024

"... Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater was like a phoenix rising from the ashes – a hopeful sign that dance fans might be witnessing a light at the end of this pandemic tunnel."
Chicago Tribune, Lauren Warnecke – March 4, 2022

"How Alvin Ailey Opened the Eyes of a 12-Year-Old Zadie Smith... Uplift!... and it was a ravishment. Nothing prepares you for the totality of Alvin Ailey: the aural, visual, physical, spiritual beauty... Heaven... Everywhere you looked: sensory pleasure... And each spring, now that I live in New York, I don't have to go very far at all to get another shot of Ailey's soaring delights."
The New York Times, Zadie Smith – April 8, 2019

"Non-profit dance companies face a multitude of challenges – many folding with the death or retirement of their founders or foundering on the rocks of financial duress. A notable exception is the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, which has not only survived but has also gone on to become nothing short of an American cultural treasure that remains as popular and artistically relevant as ever."
Chicago Sun Times, Kyle MacMillan – March 7, 2019

"an inspiring ascent from hardscrabble origins to a long, still unchallenged reign as America's most popular dance company..."
The New Yorker, Brian Seibert – December 3, 2018

"More so than any other major dance company, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater carries an aura of social, moral and even spiritual righteousness. It's not just the dancers' exquisite athleticism and peerless commitment that convey this and transfer such a rush to the audience. It's also the artistic content, especially when it directly engages with human virtues."
The Washington Post, Sarah L. Kaufman – February 7, 2018

"It became a place where artists of all races had a home. All that mattered was talent. ... And through him, African-American history was told in a way that it had never been told before – with passionate, virtuoso dance performances that transfixed audiences worldwide. Alvin said that 'Dance came from the people and that it should always be delivered back to the people.' Alvin Ailey delivered, both through his life and through the dance company that will forever bear his name."
President Barack Obama at the Presidential Medal of Freedom Ceremony – November 24, 2014

"It was phenomenal, the dancers, everybody, the performances. It was electrifying. This was one of the bucket list moments of my life... please go celebrate and see the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Phenomenal. Phenomenal."
Tamron Hall Show, Tamron Hall – December 1, 2022

WHAT CRITICS ARE SAYING ABOUT AILEY

THE REPERTORY

Cry by Alvin Ailey

“Cry,” a solo originally created for the formidable Judith Jamison in 1971, in which Ailey powerfully portrays the struggles, the dignity, and the strength of African American women.”

The New Yorker, Marina Harss – December 20, 2021

“In three sections, *Cry* explores physical hardship, emotional suffering and – to the Voices of East Harlem’s “Right On Be Free” – boundless joy. Structurally, it builds to an emphatic release...”

The New York Times, Gia Kourlas – December 10, 2015

Memoria by Alvin Ailey

“When the company performed *Memoria* in its entirety, the layered masses of the finale displayed outstanding musicality and a unity so startling it was hard to believe one’s eyes. Those young people from the Ailey School were amazingly polished.”

The Dance Enthusiast, Robert Johnson – January 29, 2024

“*Memoria* exerts a special fascination. Surely the opening section is one of the most transcendent pieces in the modern dance repertoire, thanks to its remarkable structure.”

The Dance Enthusiast, Robert Johnson – January 29, 2024

“...a serious stage drama, with mystery and poetry.”

The New York Times, Alastair Macaulay – December 11, 2014

Ode by Jamar Roberts

“Storytelling was paramount... as the act unfurled to tell a tender tale of beauty and togetherness interrupted by pain and isolation in a “time of growing gun violence,”

The Harvard Crimson, Stella A, Gilbert – May 5, 2024

“... a powerful and poetic exploration of the effects of gun violence...”

The New York Times, Gia Kourlas – December 24, 2019

“...*Ode* validates the decision to make him the troupe’s first resident choreographer. He clearly has things to say and a fresh way of saying them. His emotions and his musicality are hooked up in a distinctive, quietly persuasive fashion. In *Ode* his sensuous, full-bodied choreography is anchored in the music at a deep enough level that it’s free to flow over the surface in its own form, slowing and speeding and sometimes maintaining two tempos at once.”

The New York Times, Brian Seibert – December 11, 2019

The Approval Matrix. “‘Highbrow’ and ‘Brilliant’ – *Ode*, a piece inspired by gun violence in Alvin Ailey’s winter season.”

New York Magazine, December 23, 2019 Issue

Revelations by Alvin Ailey

“Ailey’s legendary *Revelations*, still hugely powerful after 65 years, alongside the modern pieces of precision and fire.”

The Guardian, Lyndsey Winship – August 24, 2023

“a riveting performance of Ailey’s signature *Revelations*, which brought the crowd to their feet for a long-lasting standing ovation”

VOGUE, Kiana Murden – November 30, 2023

“... one of the most celebrated and enduring works of American dance.”

The New York Times, Brian Schaefer – December 2, 2022

“I think that every American owes it to him and herself to see the Alvin Ailey troupe perform *Revelations*. It is an American phenomenon. You know, it’s like Norman Rockwell – and then there’s Alvin Ailey. I’ve probably seen it countless times and every time it’s magical, spiritual and hopeful – everything that we want ourselves to be and hope that our country will be. So, it was an extraordinary evening to be able to see that.”

Oprah Winfrey to *Entertainment Tonight* [on attending Ailey’s 50th Anniversary Gala] – December 3, 2008

WHAT CRITICS ARE SAYING ABOUT AILEY

"The centrality of *Revelations* in the repertory of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is like nothing else in dance. Ballet companies may perform *The Nutcracker* every winter; the Ailey troupe performs *Revelations* on nearly every program, the whole year through. It's the blueprint for most other works the company dances and the standard against which they're all judged. It's the perennial billboard for the company's brand and its bible, too. ... the spiritual sustenance this company provides, and not just in "*Revelations*."

The New York Times, Brian Seibert – December 18, 2020

"*Revelations* captures the urgency and the yearning expressed in spirituals such as 'Fix Me Jesus' and 'I Wanna Be Ready'. Like all great art, it never gets old. In fact, in recent years, with civil rights at the forefront of our national conscience, its power has only grown."

The New Yorker, Marina Harss – December 7, 2020

"Still, We Dance: Why Alvin Ailey's *Revelations* is More Vital Than Ever: ...Against the backdrop of both a global pandemic that disproportionately ravages communities of color and the urgency of social justice movements including Black Lives Matter, Ailey's valentine to the spirituals of his youth is its own call to action, an ode to the deliverance of self-expression in the face of adversity... That sense of history's long arc is not just an element of *Revelations*, it is woven into the fabric of a company born out of the civil rights movement to offer hope, strength, and the balm of beauty."

Town & Country, Kibwe Chase-Marshall – September 2020 issue

"... nothing will ever take the place of *Revelations*, which more than a signature work is the very core of the company's identity..."

The Associated Press, Jocelyn Noveck – December 20, 2018

"evergreen masterpiece that never seems to age."

The Boston Globe, Karen Campbell – March 24, 2018

"guarantees a standing ovation, as its gospel score and images of strength and fellowship build to a roar that engulfs you and lifts you, no matter how many times you've seen it."

The Washington Post, Sarah L. Kaufman – February 7, 2018

"*Revelations* — one of the great works of the American spirit, whose vision still speaks powerfully..."

The New York Times, Alastair Macaulay – December 5, 2014

Solo (Hans van Manen)

"Solo (1997), a lively, technically demanding classic by now 91-year-old Dutch choreographer Hans van Manen... The tightly crafted work, which perfectly fits the music by Johann Sebastian Bach."

Chicago Sun Times, Kyle MacMillan – April 20, 2024

"a new production of *Solo* by Hans van Manen that made the speed and virtuosity of Chalvar Monteiro, Yannick Lebrun and Patrick Coker priorities"

The New York Times, Gia Kourlas – December 11, 2023

WHAT CRITICS ARE SAYING ABOUT AILEY

THE DANCERS

"Yet the glorious virtuosity of the dancing means that each evening never disappoints. The dancers seem to have a unique ability to move forwards and backwards at the same time, movement flowing through their bodies with astonishing grace."

The Guardian, Sarah Crompton – September 17, 2023

"its sterling group of dancers remains primed for whatever will be asked of it."

The Wall Street Journal, Robert Greskovic – December 26, 2023 (about AAADT)

"It's almost impossible not to love the dancers at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (AAADT), such is their stage presence, their infectious joy in dancing, and their total commitment to their art."

Ballet 2000, Gerald Dowler – November 2023

"Ailey artists are known throughout the industry **for their tremendous physical shape and ability."**

The Washington Post, Sarah L. Kaufman – February 3, 2022

"Vernard J. Gilmore, one of the company's most appealing long-term performers..."

The New York Times, Alastair Macaulay – December 13, 2018

"Stamatiou is an outstanding dancer and presence on stage, though equally matched in both dance quality and charisma, by Yannick Lebrun. **It's unlikely that anyone could consistently divert their eyes away from Lebrun for more than a swift second, his mellifluous movement style combined with his magnetism:** a recipe for instant and lasting appeal."

Bachtrack, Deborah Weiss – September 8, 2023

"[Jacquelin] Harris, pouring her grief into potent tilts and contractions, was a force. With each passing season, Harris becomes more expansive, more versatile, more luminous."

The New York Times, Gia Kourlas – December 11, 2023

"... Harris has emerged as a quietly confident, eminently capable star among the company's current roster, **a dancer of transfixing technical ability and ever-deepening expressive range. She is as grounded as she is electrifying ..."**

The New York Times, Siobhan Burke – December 9, 2022 (Jacquelin Harris profile)

"The Passionate Humility of Solomon Dumas... an energy has been radiating from the stage this season, and a spectacular one for Mr. Dumas... showed his range, his unforced strength and his quiet, simmering power. He isn't flashy; his grounded presence is what makes him so beguiling."

The New York Times, Gia Kourlas – December 28, 2019

"Ailey's New Secret Weapon: The Heroically Unmannered James Gilmer...it was clear from the start that he was a standout... A strong partner who, at 6 feet 2, fills the stage with a special kind of grandeur, Gilmer is almost heroically unmannered — his dancing has an ease, a looseness that can be rare in ballet dancers."

The New York Times, Gia Kourlas – December 13, 2021

"Ashley Kaylynn Green — a dancer of absorbing, unaffected ebullience no matter the role... springs up and down from the floor with so little concern for gravity that she seems more spirit than person"

The New York Times, Gia Kourlas – December 11, 2023

"... Ashley Kaylynn Green — a powerhouse who joined the company just last year..."

The New York Times, Siobhan Burke – December 6, 2022 (in reference to *Are You in Your Feelings?*)

"but there's one you can't take your eyes off. Ashley Kaylynn Green only graduated a couple of years ago, but **she's lithe and swift and substantial and supple in her movement. Elementally she's flickers between earth and water, and she's certainly on fire."**

The Guardian, Lyndsey Winship – August 24, 2023 (in reference to *Are You in Your Feelings?*)

"Christopher Taylor, threw himself joyfully into the processional to "Wade in the Water," "Sinner Man," and "Rocka My Soul." He seemed to be truly living. The company is in particularly fine form these days."

Fjord Review, Marina Harss – December 3, 2022 (in reference to *Revelations*)

"And in 'Sinner Man,' Isaiah Day, who, remarkably, is in his final year at Juilliard, rushed across the stage with glittering vehemence. Once you notice him, he's hard to unsee: This is a dancer, somewhere between a boy and a man, and he seems headed for glory"

The New York Times, Gia Kourlas – December 11, 2023

The Boston Globe

Alvin Ailey Company's 65th Is Cause For Celebration

By: Jefferey Gantz

May 4, 2024

THE BOSTON GLOBE

SATURDAY, MAY 4, 2024

LivingArts



ROBERT TORRES

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's 65th anniversary tour arrived at the Boch Center Wang Theatre Thursday. All of this weekend's performances will close with the company's signature work, Ailey's 1960 "Revelations" (pictured).

Alvin Ailey company's 65th is cause for celebration

By Jefferey Gantz
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Not many dance companies can celebrate a 65th anniversary. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater passed that mark last year, and this weekend a 65th anniversary tour brings it back to the Boch Center Wang Theatre, under the auspices of the Celebrity Series. Ailey has been a near-annual Boston fixture over the past half-century, and it's hard to imagine another contemporary dance ensemble popular enough to fill the capacious Wang over a long weekend.

All five performances will close with the company's signature work, Ailey's 1960 "Revelations." The Saturday matinee program will feature "Ailey Classics." The Friday and Saturday evening performances will begin with new productions of Alonzo King's "Following the Subtle Current Upstream" (2000) and Ronald K. Brown's "Dancing Spirit" (2009), the latter a tribute to artistic director emerita Judith Jamison. Thursday's opening bill (to be repeated Sunday afternoon) brought a new-to-Boston pair set on the company: Amy Hall Garner's "Century" (2023), a 100th-birthday gift to her grandfather, and former Ailey dancer Jamar Roberts's "Ode" (2019), described as "a meditation on the beauty and fragility of life in a time of gun violence." One upbeat, one sobering, they made for a fine start to the weekend.

Garner's sunny "Somewhere in the Middle" was on the program that Paul Taylor Dance Company presented at the Shubert in April 2023. "Century" is another nonstop party, and the score is similar, drawn from grandfather Henry Spoorer's favorites. The upbeat "Basie Land" kicks the piece off in front of a shimmering gold curtain backdrop, the five men in red shirts and tan vests, the five women in poufy rose miniskirts, everyone jiving and jitterbugging incessantly, strutting, promenading, all the while reminding us how balletic Ailey

DANCE REVIEW

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

Presented by Celebrity Series of Boston. At Boch Center Wang Theatre, Thursday. Repeats Saturday, Sunday. Tickets \$29-\$99. 800-982-2787. www.celebrityseries.org

dancers can be. Body parts explode in every direction; partnering is fluid until the fourth of the piece's seven sections, where to the Dirty Dozen Brass Band's "Snowball," Hannah Alissa Richardson and James Gilmer have a short but sultry duet.

The fifth section of "Century" is preceded by a brief voice-over from the honoree. Jeroboam Bozeman follows that with a luscious solo to Cyrus Chestnut's "Total Praise," a moment of reflection before Jimmy Hamilton's squealing clarinet from Duke Ellington's "Virgin Land" introduces a swivel-hipping Jacquelin Harris. A leg wagging in the air induces Chalvar Monteiro to join her for a balletic duet; then Steve Allen's "This Could Be the Start of Something Big" launches the cork-popping finale. Like "Somewhere in the Middle," "Century" is a fun piece, but it's Bozeman's solo that sticks.

Roberts created "Ode" in 2019 during his three-year stint as the company's resident choreographer. The New York premiere was danced by six men, but Thursday we got Roberts's alternate version for six women, and that will be the case on Sunday as well. The score is Don Pullen's 1975 solo piano improvisation "Suite (Sweet) Malcolm (Part 1 Memories and Gunshots)," a tribute to Malcolm X.

Against a floral backdrop suggestive of Kehinde Wiley, Corrin Rachelle Mitchell lies on the floor before rising with angular gesticulations. The others join her, all in pale calf-length dresses. As Pullen's tolling gives way to nostalgia, the sextet whirl and gyrate, move in unison and

mirror image, hold hands for a moment. Some five minutes in, the music turns violent, Pullen splattering machine-gun fire all over the keyboard, everyone freezing as if in a police searchlight. Souls as well as bodies are racked by the bullets; in the midst of Pullen's banging and pounding, Harris emerges as a solo figure looking for liberation while her five sisters form a kind of Greek chorus. Eventually all six huddle, shrouded in darkness while the floral backdrop is spotlight. There's a hint of affirmation as the music unwinds, and a group embrace. Then the other five lay Mitchell back down and walk out.

Both "Century" and "Ode" were well received Thursday, but the roar that greeted the opening tableau of the evening's final work reminded one that, as always, it's "Revelations" that everybody comes to see. There's no mystery here. Ailey's 64-year-old choreography looks as fresh as ever, responsive as it is to every nuance of the gospel numbers that make up the score. The gull shapes that first appear in "I've Been 'Buked" suggest angels; when in "Fix Me, Jesus" Caroline T. Darter executes an eye-popping 360-degree turn in seconde and then perches in arabesque on Jermaine Terry's knee, she's clearly won her wings. Solomon Damas, Miranda Quinn, and Ashley Mayeux have as clearly walked through the fire in "Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel." The celebration of "Wade in the Water," where the Holy Spirit sends bodies into ecstasy, yields just momentarily to Vernard J. Gilmore's anguished attempt to rise under the weight of sin in "I Wanna Be Ready" and then the trio of Gilmer, Monteiro, and Shawn Cusaux redeeming themselves with big jets and zippy pirouettes in "Sinner Man." Deliverance through dancing is the goal, and no one has ever doubted that "Rocka My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham" delivers. Amen to that.

Jefferey Gantz can be reached at jeffreymgantz@gmail.com.

By: Kyle MacMillan

April 21, 2024

46 | Sunday, April 21, 2024 | The Hardest-Working Paper in America | suntimes.com ♦

★ ENTERTAINMENT

CS★T

BY KYLE MACMILLAN
For the Sun-Times

Revelations," Alvin Ailey's exultant 1960 tribute to the African-American spirit, ranks among the most celebrated masterpieces of modern dance alongside José Limón's "The Moor's Pavane" (1949) or Paul Taylor's "Esplanade" (1975), and rightly so.

But there can be too much of a good thing, and it was refreshing Friday evening to see the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater step away from the classic (for at least one program) to present a wonderfully fresh line-up with two works that debuted in 2023 and two slightly older pieces that received new productions that same year. The cheers from the audience made clear that the presentation was a crowd-pleaser.

The program is one of three that the New York-based ensemble is presenting as part of a six-performance run at the Auditorium Theatre that will conclude Sunday afternoon with "Ailey Classics," a program devoted entirely to works created by its founder and namesake.

In what has become an extraordinary and historic partnership, this visit is the company's 55th engagement at the venerable Chicago venue. And as usual, it cut no corners, bringing a full complement of 34 dancers and the three commendably contrasting and ambitious line-ups.

The only big change this time around comes in the company's leadership. Robert Battle, who served as its artistic director since 2011, resigned in November because of health concerns. Matthew Rushing, a company alumnus who became associate artistic director in 2020, is filling in on an interim basis.

Despite that shift at the top, the dancers were their usual model of consistency onstage, performing with all the brio, athleticism and virtuosic technique that has long been the norm with this enduring company.

The only small knock on Friday's program was the puzzling order of the works. Typically, on a mixed-repertoire lineup of this kind, companies open and close with big ensemble numbers, and, in "sandwich" fashion, present smaller pieces in the middle as kind of palate cleansers. In this case, the Ailey company began with the evening's two short pieces, a duet and another for three dancers, bringing the first intermission in oddly quick fashion, and they both got a little lost in the memory by the night's end.

It also didn't help that the opener, "Me, Myself and You" (2023), is an intimate, contemplative work performed to a recorded rendition of Duke Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood" by vocalist Brandie Sutton. A hard sell when attendees are settling in their seats and not yet fully tuned in.

That said, it is a sensual twosome by choreographer Elizabeth Roxas-Dobrich,



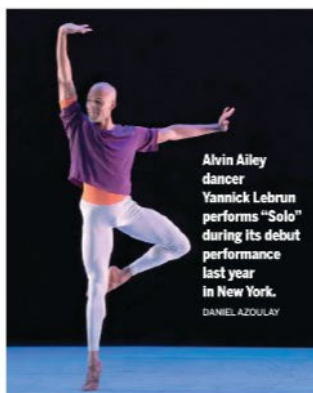
Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater debuts Amy Hall Garner's "Century" in New York in 2023. The new work was presented for the first time in Chicago on Thursday night as part of the company's six-show residency at the Auditorium Theatre. ©PAUL KOLNIK

FRESH FLAIR

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater steps away from classics with two new impressive works

who joined the Ailey company in 1984, became its first Filipina principal dancer and now teaches at the Ailey School. And it was beautifully and flowingly performed by Caroline T. Dartey and James Gilmer, with some lovely, intimate moments like his cradling her in his arms in a kind of loosely folded position and gently swinging her side to side.

Next up was "Solo" (1997), a lively, technically demanding classic by now 91-year-old Dutch choreographer Hans van Manen that has a slightly misleading title. The tightly crafted work, which perfectly fits the music by Johann Sebastian Bach, is actually for three dancers but they trade off doing thrusting, arms-driven solos and only come together as a trio momentarily at the end. The three dancers — Shawn Cusseaux, Yannick Lebrun and Chalvar Monteiro — were nothing short of superb, bringing ample doses of alacrity, dexterity, agility and zest to everything they did.



Alvin Ailey dancer Yannick Lebrun performs "Solo" during its debut performance last year in New York. DANIEL AZOULAY

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER ★★★½

When: 3 p.m. today, "Ailey Classics"

Where: Auditorium Theatre, 50 E. Ida B. Wells

Tickets: \$59-\$174

Info: auditoriumtheatre.org

The weakest link in the evening's line-up was arguably Alonzo King's "Following the Subtle Current Upstream" (2000), a sometimes stark work for 10 dancers. It contains an array of contrasting looks and moods, elaborate cross-lighting effects and a sharply variegated soundtrack that never completely jell into a unified whole.

The evening was capped with the program's second new work — New York choreographer's Amy Hall Garner's "Century" (2023) — a rousing, showy, high-stepping work for 10 dancers. It looks back to vaudeville and the Golden Age of Broadway musicals with the men in vests and slacks and the women in ruffled dresses.

Garner possesses a keen feel for jazz and show dancing, and she offers her own slightly updated take without diverging too far from the traditions, with an abundance of stylish shimmying and strutting and a little flirting to spice things up.

"Century" was an absolutely ideal closer for an absolutely winning evening.

Chicago Tribune

Mixtape Of Artistry and Legacy Gets Us 'In Our Feelings'

By: Lauren Warnecke

April 19, 2024

REVIEW ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER ★★★½

Mixtape of artistry and legacy gets us 'in our feelings'

By Lauren Warnecke
For the Chicago Tribune

If a hot girl summer was a dance, it might look something like choreographer Kyle Abraham's "Are You in Your Feelings?" It's vibrant and beautiful, fleeting and flirtatious, curious, casual and messy — in a good way.

Abraham's third work for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater held the middle spot in a program of three works Wednesday, kicking off the dance company's annual spring series in Chicago. The mixed bill is one of three alternating through Sunday at the Auditorium Theatre.

A second viewing of "Are You in Your Feelings" after last year's Chicago premiere helped, as did time for the dancers to wrap their heads around the piece's jumble of styles and steps. It's not a literal or narrative journey — it's a vibe, complemented by a mixtape of R&B, soul and hip hop tracks and a stunning setting: iridescent separates by costume designer Karen Young and an exquisite backdrop by lighting designer Dan Scully, who frames the ensemble with a semi-circular LED tube swooping through the vertical space, transposed periodically as a colorful scoop on the cyclorama.

Abraham seasons the work's nonchalant, pedestrian flavors with dashes of balletic and street dance vocabulary. Vignettes loosely translate to looking for love (occasionally in the wrong places). He seems to nostalgically nod to a time when partners met each other in person, IRL, by happenstance — not by algorithm. And that's what makes it a beau-



The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performs in Kyle Abraham's "Are You in Your Feelings?" PAUL KOLNIK

tiful mess.

One section, set to Shirley Brown's "Woman to Woman," finds Caroline Dartey and Corrin Rachele Mitchell squabbling over the same man. A gorgeous *pas de deux* for Michael Jackson, Jr. and James Gilmer burns slowly to Maxwell's "Symptom Unknown." But if Abraham made this piece with any one dancer in mind, it has to be powerhouse Ashley Kaylynn Green, who carries the piece all the way through to its exuberant end at the front of an ensemble that simmers, but never boils. Green is a reassuring reminder that you've got to love yourself before you can love anybody else, swerving in

and out of a beautiful pairing with Chalvar Monteiro that begins and ends the piece but does not define her intoxicating essence.

The evening opened with choreographer Ronald K. Brown's effervescent "Dancing Spirit," a near-perfect example of composition distilling its ending, an Afro-Caribbean joy bomb to its very essence. In some ways, "Dancing Spirit" is an exercise in patience, beginning with dancer Solomon Dumas patterning through a series of simple, striking extensions of the arm, revolving in a singular spotlight up stage. Others join, repeating the phrase with subtle variations mimicked in designer Omatayo Wunmi Olai-

ya's individualized blue and white ombre dresses and separates. You see it enough times to recognize glimmers of this beginning woven throughout the piece and infused in its ebullient finale. Music by Wynton Marsalis, Radiohead and War supports that emotional arc, but the beginning is accompanied by solo vibraphone, a recording of Stefon Harris' arrangement of Duke Ellington's "Single Petal of a Rose." Originally part of his 1959 Queen's Suite, Ellington made just one copy of the work at first, and presented it to Queen Elizabeth II. Brown created "Dancing Spirit" as an homage to Ailey's matriarch, artistic director emerita Judith Jamison, who was in

the director's chair when the piece premiered in 2009. She'll turn 81 in May.

"Generous, elegant, royal servant. Yemeya," says Brown in a recording describing the piece. He references the Yoruba goddess of creation, water, motherhood and protection. "Moving together on a shared accord — path clearly designed by the most high and all her or his servants."

Indeed, Jamison's life force continues to be felt in the Ailey company and pulses through soloist Hannah Alissa Richardson's torso and out through her fingertips in "Dancing Spirit's" most literal reference to her legacy — Richardson's partner Dumas, who embodies a part originated by the current captain of the Ailey ship, Matthew Rushing, who stepped in last winter when artistic director Robert Battle stepped away after 12 years at the helm.

Ailey's 1960 classic "Revelations" acts as the customary finale to this and a third line-up of Ailey classics, but they've dared to remove it from Program B, an exciting smattering of new and refurbished works by Elizabeth Roxas-Dobrich, Hans van Manen, Alonzo King and Amy Hall Garner running Friday and Saturday afternoon.

Lauren Warnecke is a freelance critic.

When: Through Sunday
Where: Auditorium Theatre, 50 E. Ida B. Wells Drive
Running time: 2 hours, 25 minutes with two intermissions
Tickets: \$40-\$174 at 312-341-2300 and auditoriumtheatre.org

San Francisco Chronicle

[Review: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's spirit shines on as company searches for new artistic director](#)

By: Rachel Howard

April 3, 2024



Zellerbach Hall was packed and spirits were high for opening night of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's 56th visit to Berkeley. But someone important was missing.

Robert Battle, the artistic director who tended Alvin Ailey's legacy while expanding the East Coast company's repertory in slyly inspired directions, resigned suddenly last November due to health concerns. Battle's gregarious presence was deeply missed for the launch of Cal Performances' Ailey Week on Tuesday, April 2, but his influence was profoundly felt.

This was particularly true in the evening's big hit: Hans van Manen's *Solo*.

Van Manen is Dutch and *Solo* was created in 1997 for the coolly avant-garde Nederlands Dans Theater. In the United States, it is usually performed by ballet companies, including San Francisco Ballet. Why shouldn't the Ailey company dance it, too?

On Tuesday, three extraordinary Ailey dancers delivered it more thrillingly than I have ever seen across the bay at the War Memorial Opera House. Yannick Lebrun whirled through windmill-arm turns and then pranced and shrugged, jester-like; Patrick Coker stopped on the proverbial dime and kicked his flexed foot to strut away, so virtuosically the audience exploded in laughter. Most memorable of the three stars (yes, this "solo" is actually a triple showdown), Chalvar Monteiro sashayed while looking back over his shoulder, then darted in jetés so razor sharp they practically gleamed. And don't forget to note that textbook-worthy turnout of his pirouettes.

The brilliance of *Solo* is in its combination of spare music (a Bach violin partita), minimalist costumes and simple humor, which Ailey's dancers handled with a refreshing freedom of personality. The brilliance of Battle, personally selected by Ailey muse Judith Jamison to be the troupe's third artistic leader, was to choose works that perfectly connected with and enlarged the company's formidably adaptable technique.

A very different craft marked *Me, Myself, and You*, a duet by former Ailey member and Ballet Philippines dancer Elizabeth Roxas-Dobrich, and one of the recent premieres the company has brought from its New York home season.

Dancer Caroline T. Dartney trained in rhythmic gymnastics before coming to the Ailey School, but in this duet she also seems to have mastered trapeze arts, flying into a jump and catching James Gilmer's arm mid-air, the velocity swinging her to the floor.

The scene was set to Duke Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood" in a stunning operatic recording by contemporary soprano Brandie Sutton. In a silver robe, Dartney approached a mirror, through which the majestically tall and tender Gilmer stepped like an apparition from her past. Roxas-Dobrich will surely make even more original works in her unfolding career, but if this one contained a few predictable dance images, it was nonetheless emotionally true.



The evening's slate of dances was the first of five programs — all but one end with Ailey's 1960 classic *Revelations* — that run through Sunday, April 7. Three of the programs begin with Bay Area choreographer Alonzo King's luscious masterpiece *Following the Subtle Current Upstream* in a new production. But Tuesday launched with Ronald K. Brown's *Dancing Spirit*,



and it was both infectiously groove-driven and peculiarly reassuring at a time when the company is searching for its next leader.

Created as a birthday present to artistic director emeritus Jamison in 2009, *Dancing Spirit* featured the equally energetic and elegant Hannah Alissa Richardson in a long white costume pointedly similar to the dress Jamison wore for her famous solo *Cry* in 1971. Ensemble processions that start with recognizable Ailey poses and gestures lead to the earthy West African-influenced stomps and hip-sways Brown is known for. All of this is part of the stream of history, the dance seems to say, implying that while new rivulets of influence will join the river, Alvin

Ailey's spirit will never stop coursing through his company.

And what about "Revelations," the eternal Ailey dance that undergirds it all? It's fashionable among certain critics to call this bedrock arrangement of spirituals "over-performed." An awe-struck audience at Zellerbach begged to differ. More importantly, so did the dancers, who performed it with undiminished power.

Lebrun levitated and collapsed with exquisite sensitivity in "I Want to Be Ready." Monteiro, Xavier Mack, and Christopher R. Wilson lit "Sinner Man" on fire. After the traditional "Rocka My Soul" encore, the cheers carried on.



Heads up: On Thursday, April 4, for Ailey Week's gala night, the company will dance *Revelations* with a 23-member live choir. The ovation is sure to be larger than life — and one I hope Battle hears even miles away. What a gift his leadership has given us.



[A dance about gun violence is touring nationally with Alvin Ailey's company](#)

By: Brandon Gates

February 14, 2024

Jamar Roberts did not initially know he would create a piece to address gun violence. But he did know he needed dance to cope, after years of headlines about its victims: Michael Brown, Tamar Rice, Philando Castile, Jordan Edwards and many, many more.

"It's the first thing I thought I needed to do — just for my own self, to help process what I was seeing in the media," Roberts told NPR. "It didn't really come out like 'Oh, I want to make a dance about this.' I just started sort of moving. It just appeared."

Ode is a poem to Black victims of police brutality. It was conceived in 2019, during his tenure as a resident choreographer at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. It's featured in the company's national tour around the United States that continues through spring 2024.

Roberts' work is heavy. It depicts death and purgatory.

The stage is very simple. A huge backdrop of funeral flowers hung upside down nearly touch the dancers' heads. One lies motionless on stage, their back to the audience. Five other dancers meticulously move forward and as an ensemble, try to support the fallen. Gun violence is not explicit in the work.

Ode is set to Don Pullen's 2014 jazz composition, "Suite (Sweet) Malcolm (Part 1 Memories and Gunshots)."

In some performances, the dancers are all men. In others, all women. Roberts said they allude to family and friends left behind, in the wake of tragedies.

These tragedies are increasing. According to a recent report released by the nonprofit Mapping Police Violence, 2023 marked the deadliest year for homicides committed by police since the organization began tracking them a decade ago.

According to the report, 1,232 people were killed in officer-involved shootings, with Black people disproportionately accounting for 26% of deaths, despite only making up 14% of the population.

"It's an alchemy," said Roberts acknowledging the intensity of the subject. [Dance] can be for entertainment, but I can also take the hard pieces of life and turn them into beauty. It's like taking poison and turning it into medicine."

Listen here:

<https://www.npr.org/2024/02/14/1230978019/alvin-ailey-dance-gun-violence-ode-jamar-roberts> (2 minutes)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Alvin Ailey dance company moves forward with resilience, joy

By: Cynthia Perry

January 21, 2024

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

LIVING & ARTS

Sunday, January 21, 2024 | News: livingnews@ajc.com | Delivery: ajc.com/customercare

PERFORMING ARTS DANCE



Alvin Ailey dancers Chavar Montelero and Jacquelin Harris perform in Amy Hall Garner's "Century." COURTESY OF RALL KOLANK

Alvin Ailey dance company moves forward with resilience, joy

Amy Hall Garner's 'Century' helps stay the course amid leadership change.

By Cynthia Perry
For the AJC

Last November, two weeks before the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre opened its 65th anniversary season at the New York City Center, the board of trustees announced that artistic director Robert Battle had resigned for health reasons.

The news struck a hard blow to the organization, said Matthew Rushing, the company's associate artistic director. "I felt for Mr. Battle. It was definitely hard to hear," said Rushing. "But we knew that it was an important decision, and we had to support him. And one of the best ways that we can do that is continuing his work of continuing Mr. Ailey's work."

The guiding principle is "legacy in motion," said Rushing, who is leading the company during this 65th season tour, supported by Ailey's artistic team. "It's having a clear idea of the founding vision, holding on to it and seeing what it looks like as it moves forward into the future."

It's clear in the season's programming for Ailey's national tour, which begins in Atlanta with a three-day run Thursday through Saturday at the Fox Theatre.

Among the varied programs is "Century," a new piece by



Matthew Rushing, associate artistic director of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre

DANCE PREVIEW

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre. Thursday through Saturday. "Century" will be at 7:30 p.m. Friday, 2 p.m. Saturday. \$38-\$98. Fox Theatre, 660 Peachtree St. NE, Atlanta. 855-285-8499; alvinaleiy.org; foxtheatre.org.

INSPIRE ATLANTA REDEMPTION AFTER PRISON

Former inmates lead others on

The path to reentry



James Simmons (left) and Kelvin Boykin of Redemption After Prison serve food at the Sunday morning prayer breakfast for the homeless and hungry at First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta. GAYLE WHITE FOR THE ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION

Redemption After Prison provides moral support and microloans to the newly released.

By Gayle White
For the AJC

Just after Christmas 2006, James Simmons stood outside the Five Points MARTA station with no home, no job and no particular plan. For the last quarter century, his life had been programmed: when to get up, when to work, when to go to bed, what to eat, what to wear. Now, he was on his own, abruptly released from the Georgia prison system with \$25, the clothes he was wearing and an obligation to pay for an ankle monitor.

In 1981, when Simmons began his sentence, he was a young man of 23. The MARTA rail line was in its infancy, Ron-

ald Reagan was beginning his presidency, and cellular phones were the fodder of science fiction. Now in his 50s, he felt overwhelmed.

A stranger who sensed his befuddlement showed him how to board the train. With no destination in mind, he steeled his nerve and stepped aboard the first train that stopped. To his great relief, he immediately spotted a familiar figure standing at the other end of the car holding onto a pole.

"Bill!" Simmons yelled, and the two men embraced.

With that encounter — whether by chance or providence — a friendship

Redemption continued on E9

Ailey continued on E8

Ailey

continued from E1

Amy Hall Garner that will likely set the tone for a vibrant future grounded in the Ailey tradition. Garner's first piece for the main company celebrates the 100th birthday of her grandfather, Henry Spooner, highlighting his joy, resilience and love of jazz.

The idea parallels Alvin Ailey, who drew inspiration from "blood memories" from his childhood and growing up, "images and moments that he remembered from his culture," Rushing said. "Revelations," for example, pulled from Ailey's early childhood memories of his Baptist church community in rural Texas.

Garner's music choices — Ray Charles, Count Basie, Duke Ellington and others — reflect the jazz music her grandfather loves. They also align with jazz greats who collaborated with Ailey. But Garner's style reflects her own generation. "It's a new voice talking about her own experiences within the Black culture specifically," said Rushing. "But also, this experience speaks universally."

Garner, who began dancing in Huntsville, Alabama, has forged a wide-ranging path as dancer and choreographer. Her work has taken her from the Juilliard School to Broadway, from contemporary dance companies to New York City Ballet. She's coached Beyoncé. For all these pathways, Garner kept strong ties with Ailey and was recently named an Ailey Artist in Residence.

The idea for "Century" came from pandemic days, when Garner and her family spent 18 months in Spooner's home. Four generations lived under one roof, a circumstance that allowed for deep conversations with Spooner — on aging, on



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre debuts "Century," a new piece by Ailey Artist in Residence Amy Hall Garner. It celebrates the 100th birthday of Garner's grandfather and his love of jazz with music by Count Basie, Ray Charles and Duke Ellington. COURTESY OF RUVEN AFANADOR

parenting, on planning and living a disciplined life, on the prospect of turning 100.

"He's been such an inspiration to me," Garner said of Spooner, whose milestone birthday was Dec. 30. "He's been such an example to me. My son is named after him. He is just that pillar in our family, in his community. He's that rock, and he's the last of that generation with my grandmother and all of their siblings on both sides."

While creating "Century," Garner tapped childhood memories of large family gatherings at her great-grandmother's home in New Roads, Louisiana — a house built on cinder blocks across a gravel-paved road from the levee. There, fresh country air blended with smells of gumbo, spirits and a hint of cigarette smoke, recalled Garner. Jazz, zydeco

and old-school blues music played as her aunts and grandparents danced.

Garner, then 8 or 9 years old, absorbed the rhythms and groove of their dancing. "It had a down-home feel," she said. "It was playful. It was sensual. It had a feel-good kind of spirit," giving her a "sprinkle" of her grandparents' lives when they were young and carefree, she said.

When he was younger, Spooner partnered his wife with "amazing rhythm," said Garner. "He was just smooth all the time."

Choreographing "Century," Garner blended the rhythms and emotions she remembered from those gatherings with her own dance vocabulary that's grounded in ballet, modern and contemporary dance.

She leaned into the grit of Rebirth Brass Band's "Why

Your Feet Hurt," a nod to Louisiana's second-line tradition. She slowed dancers down for Cyrus Chestnut's rendition of "Total Praise," which hearkens to quieter moments when Garner listened to her grandfather rehearse with his church's gospel choir.

Garner melded her style with Ailey dancers' brilliant Horton-based technique, sometimes changing rhythms to give their dancing more punch.

Rushing noted her gift for "pulling more from the dancers, challenging them, pushing them to their limit to see what they can learn in that place."

Christopher Wilson, a native of Augusta, dances a featured role in a number set to Ray Charles' version of "Alexander's Ragtime Band." Garner has challenged Wilson to move with a fleet and explosive speed that's expanded his skill set.

Battle's departure also challenged Wilson. He initially felt shock and grief. But then he spent Thanksgiving at home surrounded by family. He thought about how he could transform those feelings into a performance that would project Ray Charles' exuberant style of showmanship.

"I told myself, you have a job to do, and that is to affect someone in the audience, to change a life somehow," said Wilson. "Even if it's one person, that's more than enough."

That kind of resiliency will help carry the company through its leadership change. Rushing said that whether the new artistic director comes from within the organization as Judith Jamison did, or from outside the company as Battle did, that person must have vision. Beyond that — like Garner — they must understand Ailey.

"That means being able to embody Ailey as an artist, to articulate Ailey's vision to the public, to teach Ailey (in) the school," said Rushing.

Meanwhile, works like "Century" will help the company move forward, solid in Ailey's belief that "the dance came from the people" and should be "delivered back to the people."

It's a mantra that Garner carries wherever she choreographs, because it supports her belief that people come to the theater to be uplifted, inspired and hopeful. "So I hope the next director really anchors their moment in that," she said.

Programming also includes Ronald K. Brown's "Dancing Spirit," Elizabeth Roxas Dobris' "Me, Myself and You," a revival of Hans Van Manen's "Solo" and Kyle Abraham's "Are You in Your Feelings?" reprised from last season. "Revelations" will close each performance.

The New York Times

When Joy and Speed Are on Their Toes

By: Gia Kourlas

December 12, 2023

GIA KOURLAS | CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

When Joy and Speed Are on Their Toes

THE DANCERS don't so much step onto the stage in Amy Hall Garner's "Century" as burst within it like a glitter bomb, showering the space in pink and gold. For "Century," her first work for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, performed on Friday at New York City Center, it's clear that Garner doesn't merely know a party when she sees one — she knows how to dream one up. A metallic curtain hangs in the back as dancers, looking like fuchsia flowers, vibrate from their shoulders to their feet like petals caught in a breeze.

Wearing dresses featuring feathered skirts and striped bustiers and, for the men, tight pants and short-sleeve shirts so form fitting that they could be painted on, the dancers are clearly committed to a celebration. But Garner adds another element to their flash: breathtaking speed.

A rising choreographer who will present a new work at New York City Ballet next spring, Garner, here, takes inspiration from her family. She regards "Century" as an

CONTINUED ON PAGE C2

The Ailey troupe presents premieres at City Center, including one featuring a Duke and a Count.



THOMAS A. CLARY/AGENCY FRANCE PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

When Joy and Speed Are on Their Toes

CONTINUED FROM PAGE C1

early birthday present to her grandfather Henry Spooner — he turns 100 on Dec. 30 — and has built a score for it based on his taste, which includes songs by Count Basie, Duke Ellington and Rebirth Brass Band. One section ends with a voice-over by Spooner that speaks to his longevity: "Why my life was extended I don't know and I don't question it. Something must be doing good, I'm still here."

In its opening two numbers, "Basie Land," performed by Basie, and "Alexander's Ragtime Band (Live)," performed by Ray Charles, "Century" is powered by the magnetic, expansive partnering of James Gilmer and Coral Dolphin, and Christopher R. Wilson, whose darting footwork strikes like invisible sparks.

But Garner can also use speed, however energizing, until it wears out its welcome. When Ashley Kaylynn Green — a dancer of absorbing, unaffected ebullience no matter the role — appears in profile at the start of "Why Your Feet Hurt" by Rebirth Brass Band, a different temperament, mercifully, takes over.

Rooted to the floor, Green gives in to the rise and fall of her body as it dips into the music's groove. There are swinging, swimming arms as other dancers join in, including Michael Jackson Jr. and Christopher Taylor, giving their all to the song's title chant. In this section, the sharpest in "Century," all the dancers count. But it belongs to Green who springs up and down from the floor with so little concern for gravity that she seems more spirit than person.

To the spare, gentle "Total Praise" performed by Cyrus Chestnut, the dance takes a more meditative turn. Taylor, balancing on one leg, the other bent at a right angle, rotates ever so slowly; in other moments, which can get trite, he pauses to stare con-



ANDREA MOHIN/THE NEW YORK TIMES

templatively into the distance.

But this is, after all, a birthday party — one that kicks into high gear again as the dancers dig into Garner's fast feet and blurred spins. That their bodies remain legible is laudable, but there is a sameness in its adrenaline-junkie pursuit of dance joy. In "Century," the sections seem superficially linked, more by costume (Susan Roemer) and lighting and scenic design (Nicole Pearce) than by choreographic flow. They could almost exist as stand-alone numbers.

A similar theme of looking back was present in Ailey's other world premiere, "Me, Myself and You," a duet by Elizabeth

Top, Coral Dolphin, foreground, and others in Amy Hall Garner's "Century" at New York City Center. Above, Caroline T. Dartey and James Gilmer in the premiere of "Me, Myself and You."

Roxas-Dobrich, a former company member. Set to Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood," as performed by Damien Sneed and Brandie Sutton, the shadowy work, shown Thursday, focuses on the memory of a romance.

Right off, there was a problem: the set. From my seat, it was virtually hidden from view, though somewhere in the left back corner of the stage I could see a gleaming surface. The structure, credited to Roxas-Dobrich and Joseph Anthony Gaito, turned out to be a folding mirror screen.

From the start, the spotlight is on Caroline T. Dartey — this is the woman's story more than the man's — who wears a shimmering long robe by Dante Baylor. Extending a leg forward, she arches back with yearning. (We are in a sentimental mood.) After opening the screen and pressing against its reflection and curling a leg with longing, Dartey turns around and with a buoyant, exuberant leap, finds her way back to center stage.

As if it is a portal from another world, James Gilmer seems to enter through the mirror like mist, swooping in just in time to catch Dartey as she, again, extends a leg into the air and falls into his arms. Her robe slips away to reveal a sheer black dress, which matches Gilmer's loose pants. When he embraces her, she slips out of his arms until all they hold is air.

Repeatedly, they find each other, hooking elbows on occasion, and part ways. And so it goes. "Me, Myself and You" is a slight work, but not just because it's so brief; instead of moving, it's maudlin. When Gilmer slips away for good, the music ends and Dartey ponders her fate in silence.

Thursday also saw a new production of "Solo" by Hans van Manen that made the speed and virtuosity of Chahvar Monteiro,

Yannick Lebrun and Patrick Coker priorities. Each were dashing enough, but as for the dance? Set to Bach, it's packed with cloying gestures — the worst is a shrug — whimsically meant to break the fourth wall.

Ailey's "Survivors," featuring Jacquelin Harris and Vernard J. Gilmore as Nelson and Winnie Mandela, was more soulful in its penetrating look at the anguish of injustice.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater
Through Dec. 31 at New York City Center
in Manhattan; nycitycenter.org.

Dancing to Max Roach and Abbey Lincoln, they each held their spines with unsentimental power, and Harris, pouring her grief into potent tilts and contractions, was a force.

With each passing season, Harris becomes more expansive, more versatile, more luminous. On Friday, in Kyle Abraham's "Are You in Your Feelings," a love letter to Black culture and music set to soul, hip-hop and R&B, she shimmered, displaying a kind of pedestrian virtuosity in which every ounce of her tiny, eloquent body was the music.

"Revelations," Ailey's 1960 classic, closed both programs with some fine performances, including Akua Noni Parker, the former company member returning as a special guest opposite (the ageless!) Lebrun in "Fix Me, Jesus." Monteiro's "I Wanna Be Ready" held deep pockets of mystery and pain. And in "Sinner Man," Isaiah Day, who, remarkably, is in his final year at Juilliard, rushed across the stage with glittering vehemence. Once you notice him, he's hard to unsee: This is a dancer, somewhere between a boy and a man, and he seems headed for glory.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

[Fresh Footwork From Alvin Ailey](#)

By: Robert Greskovic

December 27, 2023

Fresh Footwork From Alvin Ailey

By ROBERT GRESKOVIC

The 65th anniversary season of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, running through Sunday at City Center, began in late November without Robert Battle, the troupe's artistic director since 2011, at its helm. A world premiere by Mr. Battle, who resigned for health reasons in mid-November, had to be canceled, but otherwise the show went on with only a few programming adjustments.

As the run unfolded, two world premieres and new productions of four dances revived for the season gave the current roster of 38 dancers, including five making guest appearances, plenty of opportunities to shine. Sometimes it was the impact of individual performers, more than their choreographic challenges, that stood out.

Of the world premieres, Amy Hall Garner's "Century" showed more staying power, with its energetic male and female cast of 10 taking inspiration from the accompanying musical selections—seven recorded segments ranging from Count Basie to Duke Ellington—that Ms. Garner chose to honor her grandfather, who was turning 100. The almost breathlessly paced series of solo, duo and group comings and goings began with its men and women, costumed by Susan Roe-

mer, in dance shoes and layered clothing of pinks and golds, and ended with them barefoot, in pared-back outfits as they get down and find a more personal groove.

The other new work, Elizabeth Roxas-Dobrich's "Me, Myself and You," came and went mostly as a slick, one-note affair for a woman who finds herself and a phantom partner in a three-way mirror; leggy Caroline T. Dartey and intense James Gilmer made for a strong first cast, giving more than they're given by their choreography. Accompanied by a recording of Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood," the dance takes form as a sleek, acrobatic adagio that displays its dancers' limberness while largely failing to convey the self-reflection and personal interaction promised in the dance's title.

Of the revivals, Ronald K. Brown's "Dancing Spirit" (2009) lived afresh for its cast of nine as a tribute to former Ailey star Judith Jamison, who became the company's artistic director following Ailey's death and who turned 80 years old this year. One of Ms. Jamison's signature roles had her regally gliding through the "Wade in the Water" section of Ailey's perennially popular "Revelations" (1960), set to traditional spirituals. For Mr. Brown's tribute to Ms. Jamison, Omotayo Wunmi Olaiya designed

various costumes in white with blue detailing that suggests the effects of contact with water.

"Dancing Spirit"—set to a mix of recorded tracks, from Wynton Marsalis to Radiohead—evolves from measured processional paces to freer ones, throughout which one of the women gains prominence by displaying moves familiar from Ms. Jamison's repertory. Wearing a long, flounced-skirt that recalled costuming associated with Ms. Jamison, both statuesque Constance Stamatiou and elegant Hannah Alissa Richardson, in different casts, honored the former Ailey star's particular artfulness with their gestural and full-bodied moves releasing joyful dimensions.

"Revelations" itself—the troupe's hands-down audience and programming favorite, performed to live music on select bills—gave the current dancers a showcase to make their marks. Christopher Taylor, for

instance, was a vibrant, buoyant baptismal celebrant in "Wade in the Water," while Corrin Rachelle Mitchell, in the same cast, invested her dancing with serpentine flexibility in Ms. Jamison's former role, working deftly with the segment's inspired prop, a shimmering parasol.

Kyle Abraham's "Are You in Your Feelings" (2022), set to a mixtape of soul, hip-hop and R&B, prompts the sort of palpable rapport and audible audience delight that Ailey's "Revelations" has long elicited. Dressed by Karen Young in layered, electric-rainbow hues that present the dancers radiantly aglow, and enhanced by Dan Scully's harmonious lighting, the cast's dozen men and women make for beguiling theater with their savvy blend of dance moves, everyday gestures and interpersonal interactions.

Gracing the strong first cast of "Are You in Your Feelings" in particular were Ms. Dartey and Ms.

A scene from Ronald K. Brown's 'Dancing Spirit'



Mitchell facing off to Shirley Brown's "Woman to Woman." Each strikes a memorable figure as the two embody women partly at odds and partly in sync, both physically and emotionally.

Elsewhere, Isaiah Day, an eye-catching newcomer still completing his dance studies at the Juilliard School, gave noteworthy performances, becoming, for instance, a kind of celestial athlete in another of the season's revivals, Alonzo King's "Following the Subtle Current Upstream" (2000). The nine-dancer suite to a three-part mix of recorded music fails to feel whole as it proceeds, but Mr. Day makes his way impressively.

While the Ailey company seeks its next artistic director, its sterling group of dancers remains primed for whatever will be asked of it.

Mr. Greskovic writes about dance for the Journal.



[Legacy of choreographer Alvin Ailey lives on at his New York dance theatre](https://www.nbcnews.com/now/video/legacy-of-choreographer-alvin-ailey-lives-on-at-his-new-york-dance-theatre-203459653683)

February 1, 2024



Watch here:

<https://www.nbcnews.com/now/video/legacy-of-choreographer-alvin-ailey-lives-on-at-his-new-york-dance-theatre-203459653683>

Alvin Ailey was a choreographer who founded the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1958 at just 27 years old. Ailey choreographed over 100 ballets and was known to showcase the many experiences of African Americans. Today, his legacy still lives at his dance theatre in New York.



[Watch: Alvin Ailey organization continues to mold the next Black dancers of the future](#)

February 5, 2024



Alvin Ailey was a passionate dancer and skilled choreographer who founded The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1958. Since then, Mr. Ailey's vision expanded to eventually include Ailey II, its junior company; the acclaimed Ailey School, plus an array of Ailey Extension classes and education programs.

In an interview with theGrio, former star dancer Matthew Rushing, now an associate artistic director for the Ailey Dance Theater, shares how the organization continues to mold the brilliant Black dancers of the future. Check out the full interview above!

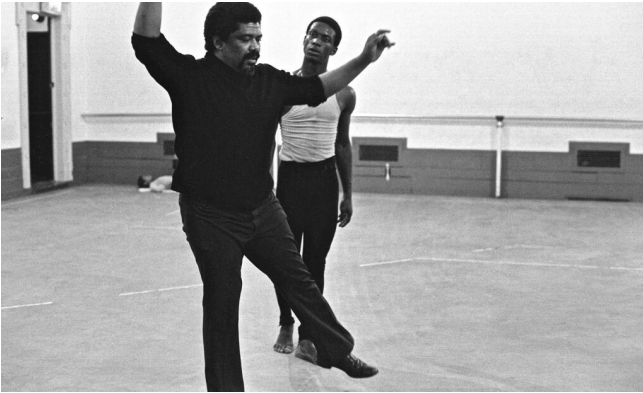
Watch here:

<https://thegrio.com/2024/02/05/watch-alvin-ailey-organization-continues-to-mold-next-black-dancers-of-the-future/>
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This article was also picked up by: [Yahoo News](#), [News on Media](#)

Click [here](#) to watch TheGrio's Instagram post

Connecting Dancer Alvin Ailey's Life Story with Classrooms



Acclaimed choreographer Alvin Ailey infused his life story and Black cultural roots into his modern dance works, which have been enjoyed by millions since he first founded Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1958 in New York City. Early dances such as *Revelations* remain favorites in the company repertory today, but many people don't know the background of the artist, who died in 1989.

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and The WNET Group's Kids' Media and Education team have embarked on an exciting new collaboration to bring new video and related educational materials about Alvin Ailey to educators around the country. The new resources use the film "Portrait of Ailey" to connect high school classrooms to Ailey's life story and to provide information on how to analyze and

understand the art of dance. The materials are available on PBS LearningMedia, a dynamic website that offers preK-12 educators access to thousands of resources from PBS stations and partners.

"I wanted to do the kind of dance that could be done for the man on the streets, the people. I wanted to show Black people that they could come down to these concert halls. That it was part of their culture being done there. And that it was universal."

As a public media provider, The WNET Group's mission includes connecting New York City's outstanding arts organizations with audiences nationwide, and to inform, educate and entertain. The film "Portrait of Ailey," produced by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and associated education materials can be used by teachers around the U.S., with guidance on how the resources meet each state's learning standards for grades 9 through 12. The film reveals a thoughtful artist who drew on life experience to create dance, and also followed his curiosity into the unknown. It will be presented in eight parts; two—Alvin Ailey's Texas Roots and Alvin Ailey's California Inspirations—are available now.

Ailey's early years unfolded on the edges of the U.S. before he became a central figure of modern dance, touring the world with his company. He was raised in poverty in 1930s Texas, picking cotton as a small child and loving blues and gospel music. Ailey spent his teenage years in California, studying dance with modern dance pioneer Lester Horton and performing in his early 20s with Carmen de Lavallade and Maya Angelou. He moved to New York City in 1954.



The U.S. government chose Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater to represent American dance on sponsored tours in Asia and Australia in 1962, and in China in 1985. Ailey's choreography was broadcast around the globe when he set *Revelations* on the Ballet Folklórico for the opening ceremonies of the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, the first Olympics broadcast live and in color. The company tours internationally to this day, performing the works of Ailey and contemporary choreographers.

The new education resources on PBS LearningMedia supports the aim of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater to "allow a new generation of students to learn more about Ailey as a dancer, choreographer, celebrity, teacher, social activist, dance ambassador, arts advocate, and supporter of new choreographic voices and visions."

The mission of the Kids' Media and Education team at WNET is to expand minds, ignite curiosity, and help children become confident and caring people. It creates video and interactive projects for multiple platforms, infusing fun with a range of curriculum-based content for kids from preschool through high school. Its projects exploring STEM, social/emotional development, language learning, history, global understanding, social justice, and the arts spark imagination, encourage critical thinking, and reflect diverse perspectives. The Kids' Media and Education team has partnered with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater as well as with the Liberty Science Center in Jersey City, NJ, and the American Classic Orchestra, among other nonprofit groups.

The WNET Group is proud to share New York City's vibrant and unparalleled arts scene and history with young people around the country through PBS Learning Media.

Upfront The **A**List

6 Life Lessons From Judith Jamison

1 Find Discipline

I've always loved structure. I could find structure with piano, violin and, later, with dance. That discipline—and the discipline of faith—kept me on a straight path.

2 Connect to Genius

After joining the Ailey company in 1965, I was lucky enough to establish a spiritual connection with the greatest artist I've ever met, [company founder] Alvin Ailey. He would show me a step; I would move. There was very little conversation. He was like a spiritual walker.

3 Build It

When I became artistic director after Mr. Ailey passed, I tried to figure out how to fulfill his vision. And it was sitting right in front of me: build our own studio, our own building. We were bursting at the seams. I just wish he were here to see it. There is light inside. You can feel it.



4 Take Care of Your Body

I took care of mine as best I could. When you're older, you can keep it going

with smaller movements: Just sitting here, I'm doing contractions and releases, trying to strengthen my core. You won't be moving as robustly as you used to, but you can still do something.

"If you really love dance, you aim for infinity in what you're trying to do with that instrument called your body."

5 Choose Your Family

My kids are the Ailey dancers, and they grew up right before my eyes. Now they have children, so I have a bunch of grandchildren! They send me pictures of their families, and it's a whole other level of young people—kids, babies being born. Brings a smile to my face.

6 Dress for Success

It's a uniform I've been wearing forever: a black turtleneck that this wonderful designer from Brooklyn makes for me. Thank God I have three of them. [Laughs.] —As told to Elizabeth Zimmer

Judith Jamison, 80, served as the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's artistic director from 1989 until 2011, when she took (a very active) emerita status. In November, the company, as part of its 65th-anniversary celebration, dedicated its opening gala to her.

Makeup artist: Andrea Fairweather/Fairweather Faces; Inset: Jack Mitchell/Getty Images

PHOTOGRAPH BY RUVEN AFANADOR

DECEMBER 2023 / JANUARY 2024 7

Judith Jamison on Her Time at Alvin Ailey and the Privilege of Being a Dancer: “There’s Always a Reciprocity to Performance”

By: Brande Victorian

November 27, 2023



2023 is a milestone year for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (AAADT) and its artistic director emerita Judith Jamison. On May 10, Jamison celebrated her 80th birthday, and on Nov. 29, the dance company will hold its annual opening night gala celebrating its 65th season; founder Alvin Ailey and a group of Black dancers first performed under the AAADT name in New York City in March of 1958.

“Numbers and ages really do matter,” says Jamison, a Philadelphia native who began dance training at the age of 6 at the Judimar School of Dance. “I love when people say, ‘The number doesn’t matter.’ Oh, yes it does when you’ve been dancing most of your life. It matters a whole lot because your body is catching up to what craziness you were doing as a dancer. At 80, everything doesn’t work the same way. And that’s the challenge, finding out, what can I do? What can’t I do? But I’m loving it.”

AAADT will pay homage to Jamison’s tenure as artistic director of the company from 1989-2011 during its November opening night gala and again on Dec. 19 when it premieres its “Pioneering Women of Ailey” program with special performances celebrating her alongside fellow Black women dancers Carmen de Lavallade, Denise Jefferson, and Sylvia Waters.

“One thing I can tell you is I have always been and will always be in awe of one of the most fabulous artists that I’ve ever had the privilege of working with, and that’s Carmen de Lavallade,” says Jamison. “She doesn’t get enough said about her. She’s a total icon. And she’s done everything. She’s been a guest artist with American Ballet Theater, she was doing a one-woman show when she must’ve been 80-something. My hat is off to her.

“When I think of some of the things I’ve done, for me, they’re on a good level,” Jamison adds. “I’m not belittling what I’ve done, but all of us have contributed something very different, and I always consider them to have contributed even more than I have.”

Jamison talks to THR about learning from Ailey, working on Broadway with the likes of Gregory Hines and Mercedes Ellington and how she was discovered.

When you joined the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1965, did you have a sense that it was the beginning of something great for you?

No, I didn’t have any revelations like that. I was like a kid in a China shop. Agnes DeMille discovered me in Philadelphia. Everybody thinks Mr. Ailey brought me in but it was Agnes DeMille. We did a piece called The Four Marys and my first gig was as a guest artist with American Ballet Theater. So, I’m in New York for the first time. By the time Mr. Ailey saw me at this audition for a Harry Belafonte special that Donald McKayle was choreographing, I thought, “Are you kidding me? This man is calling me to ask me whether I’d be interested in doing this. Yes!” And when I walked into my first rehearsal, I was put very much at ease by James Truitte who I’d seen dance. He was one of the original members of Ailey, and I had seen him perform already. But I walked into this small rehearsal studio at the YWCA on the West Side, at 50th and 8th Avenue, and in each corner of the room, somebody was learning something. My eyes were wide open, and I was fascinated. There was no time to go, “Oh, this is a pivotal time in my life.” It’s only in retrospect that that happened.

Six years later you performed Cry for the first time, a piece Ailey dedicated to Black women that has gone on to be one of the signature choreographies of the company. What do you remember about that night in 1971?

I didn't think anything unusual had happened when the curtain went down, except people kept applauding. We had gotten that before, but not by myself with a standalone solo. So when I did Cry that night, I hadn't run it from beginning to end, so I didn't know what it was going to do to me. And God bless the late Dudley Williams because he saw that it looked like my legs must have been jelly when it came to that last section, and he came from the back of the theater to stage right and just his look and his enthusiasm and how he was using his arms. He was encouraging me, "Keep going, keep going, keep going." They still do that to this day, the dancers, whenever a young woman does Cry. There's so much enthusiasm that at times when I was AD [artistic director], I had to tell them, "Okay, shut it down, y'all. The audience is going to hear you cheering the person on." But that care and that love is there to get you through no matter what. And when the curtain went down, I was on the floor. I literally fell out on the floor. Emotionally, physically, and spiritually it wears you out if you really put your whole self in it. So the curtain went down, there's lots of applause. Of course, as a performer, there's no way they're going to raise the curtain up and you'd be lying on the floor, so I get up and I take a bow, and I kept taking bows over and over until I don't know which number it was, but they were still screaming and yelling.



I still didn't find anything particularly unusual until Mr. Ailey came backstage, and he said, "What I do next? I don't even know if he knew it was going to go where it went because you don't choreograph thinking, "Let me make a hit." You choreograph out of the depths of your soul and your spirit and your honesty and your truth and your gut. And it could fall flat on its face, you know? But it didn't. I was older so it didn't happen to me when I first joined the company and I think that was wonderful, but I still got sucked in because it becomes a whirlwind. Young people don't understand once you reach that level of people really loving you and then the press gets a hold of you, it takes you to places you have never been. People are surrounding you that never surrounded you before. You have to make decisions.

How did you handle that?

I had a lot of guidance. And I still did stupid things, but I had some really good guidance. The agent for the company, his name was Paul Szilard, he died when he was 99 years old. He was marvelous, we called him the last of the impresarios because he was. And he became my agent as well. So there was protection there. We also had a press person in place who had been working with the company for years, and she stepped forward and covered the bases that needed to be covered so I wouldn't get swamped. You have to disseminate between what's real and what's temporary, what will pass in a minute, in a heartbeat. And you can't afford to let your feet come off the ground. Keep your feet on the ground and stop trying to float. You're dancing, you're performing, you're trying to get this message across. It's not your life. To this day, it's still hard for me to get a cab. That keeps you pretty grounded.



How did your experience on Broadway and with other ballet companies compare to your time with the Alvin Ailey agency?

With Broadway, it was a completely different discipline. Can you imagine working with Gregory Hines? That was a real fantasy for me, and it was there every night. That was a very interesting period in my life. I learned a lot, not just from him, but from Mercedes Ellington who was in *Sophisticated Ladies*. There were always people around you that would keep you walking the right way, like bumpers. I call them spiritual walkers. They keep you on that path that you're supposed to be on. When you're performing, that's a privilege, number one. But also, it's a matter of giving, not a matter of going inside yourself so far that nobody knows who you are. There's always a reciprocity to performance. You have to go in, but you have to give it out. You have to give it back because you're not dancing in a vacuum. Just being excellent and people throwing accolades at you is passing. Stage is your heart and soul and mind and the love that you have for people. Mr. Ailey showed that to us right away by demonstration. You could see how much he loves people; he wasn't dancing just to show himself off.

Broadway was eight shows a week of what I thought in the beginning was the same thing over and over and over again. What woke me up was one day I came out on stage and my first entrance was just walking out and meeting Gregory. And he would gesture to me, and his hand would be standing there, and for some reason I was looking at the bottom of his hand instead of the top of his hand because I tripped. My heel caught in my skirt, and I fell flat on my face. First entrance. And that's when you wake up and ask yourself, well number one, where's your head that you can all of a sudden fall flat on your face? That means you're taking for granted that you're doing eight shows a week and thinking that eight shows are the same thing. You're not considering the audience. You're not considering your fellow artists that are dancing. You're not considering the whole entity of performance. It's a completely different discipline than concert modern dance and just as important. And I got straightened out real quick.

Talk about coming back to AAADT and the day you assumed the role of artistic director.

We were in St. Louis in 1988. I was in a restaurant with Mr. Ailey, who had invited me to lunch. He had asked me to come on tour with the company and I knew he was ill. I hadn't been on tour because I'd started the Jamison Project and he basically, just said, "I'd like you to run the company." And I said, no question, "Sure." It was no question because I'd been working with him from '65 and seeing him live since '63 in Philadelphia when I was in college. This man, I loved completely. I absolutely loved him. And when he said that to me, it's like, what do you, you know? That was simply it. And by '89 he passed.

What were some of the biggest challenges stepping into that role?

Well, for the first two years, I wouldn't say there were many because the only thing that was in mind was this is going to stay afloat, and we were going to honor and elevate and make sure history understands who this man was by our existence and by our excellence and by our love for what we do. But it was a whirlwind because when I took over, we were in a lot of debt. A lot of debt. Ironically, the debt was coming from honoring someone else. He was so dedicated to making sure that this person was honored, and that person was Katherine Dunham. In order to put these productions on, it costs a lot of money. And by the time I took over, it was difficult. But when I think back on it, I didn't think, "Oh, how am I going to do this?" I'm doing whatever I have to be doing. I'm already in it. So there's no time to go, "Now what do I do?" It's just, do. I never go down that route. I don't understand why anybody would go down that route because you're not going to get anything done. Most of us want to go back. But if you're in a whirlwind, you don't have time.

Of all of the accolades you've received personally and as part of the company, are there any you're most proud of?



Seeing the company dancers each generation. Every generation that comes speaks to the genius of a man named Alvin Ailey. We're getting farther and farther away from people even knowing him, not seeing him, meeting him, anything, and every generation has to continue the legacy and love it, and if they don't, they need to go someplace else. So the more I see these young dancers who can do so much more technically than we ever could be, I'm inspired to let them. I always am proud of them when they do come to a revelation about *Revelations*, about *Blues Suite*. When that light bulb finally goes on, your dancing changes in ways. And when you're challenged by all the other repertory that's in the company—there's got to be over 200 now because Mr. Ailey did 75 — when you honor that, and you know how important it is to not have your history erased like people are trying to do again. When you realize that you can't have that happen, you can't let anybody do that to you, the way you keep that up is to educate yourself, love what you're doing, be excellent about what you're doing, and keep a good sense of humor. People forget that sometimes.

Mr. Ailey used to remind us if we got too all high and mighty in our heads, "You know you're a dancer?" He'd say it in such a way that wasn't derogatory, but it was loaded with, look, this is a privilege for you to be able to get on stage and make a living doing these things. And you should enjoy that and understand how privileged you are to be gifted with these God gifts that are given to you. So enjoy it. And have some levity.

This article was also picked up by: [Yahoo News](#)

How Judith Jamison Started Dancing for Alvin Ailey

By: Courtney Escoyne

May 2023 Issue (Online: 5/4/23)

from the vault

"Cry is Alvin's work but, when I dance it, it is mine, too," Jamison said in the November 1972 issue of *Dance Magazine* of the iconic solo Ailey created on her. "Dance is a very perfect thing. You give yourself to it, yet you have to prove your power over it.... I have to make it happen!"

Simply Divine

"There is about her an aura of mysticism. She appears onstage, larger than life, more an apparition than a performer, compelling us to look upon her as we might a temple dancer—with a sense of religiosity, of awe." Those were the opening lines of Olga Maynard's November 1972 *Dance Magazine* cover story on Judith Jamison, then in her late 20s and at the height of her powers as a star performer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Her professional start, however, was far from assured: Though Agnes de Mille recruited her to dance *The Four Marys* with American Ballet Theatre when it premiered in 1965, the contract was short-lived, leading Jamison to work nondance jobs (including as a ride operator at the World's Fair) while taking classes and auditioning. "Nothing in my life, until then, had prepared me for rejection," she told *Dance Magazine*. "Every time I was turned down I took it personally." It was at one such unsuccessful audition that summer, for Donald McKayle, that Alvin Ailey spotted her and decided to ask her to join his company. ("You mean, you decided to take me *that* day, the day of the audition?" Jamison asked Ailey when the two told the story of their first encounter to Maynard. "I went home and cried for three days until you called me!" Ailey replied, "Well, I didn't know where to find you and I had to get your phone number from Carmen [de Lavallade] and Carmen was out of town.") Jamison would dance with Ailey for the next 15 years (save for a brief period between 1966 and 1967 when the company disbanded), and returned to lead the company in 1989 as Ailey's handpicked successor. Now artistic director emerita, Jamison, who celebrates her 80th birthday this month, is the recipient of a *Dance Magazine* Award (1972), a Kennedy Center Honor (1999) and a National Medal of Arts (2001), and was inducted into the National Museum of Dance Hall of Fame in 2015. —Courtney Escoyne



[For This Dancer And Choreographer, Black Storytelling Centers Love — Not Suffering](#)

By: Sierra Lyons
September 20, 2023

Jamar Roberts brings stories to life by expressing the beautiful breadth of the Black experience, not just the trauma.

For dancer and choreographer Jamar Roberts, work means more than simply creating movement. It's about recalling pivotal moments throughout history, his childhood and current events, and bringing them back to life. Roberts' passion for Black storytelling is translated through the depth of research he does for each project, amplifying messages of love and tragedy for his audiences. When Roberts dives into often forgotten eras, music and topics, he hopes to learn as much about them as possible to tell each story through dance, with grace and authenticity.

Roberts first got his start as a dancer for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 2002, where he worked his way up to [serving as resident choreographer](#) of the company from 2019-2022. During his time at the company, he created five bodies of work — his final one, "In A Sentimental Mood," debuted last year. The piece fused Duke Ellington's music with experimental and alternative sounds from Rafiq Bhatia of Son Lux, to help dancers tell a story of Black love.

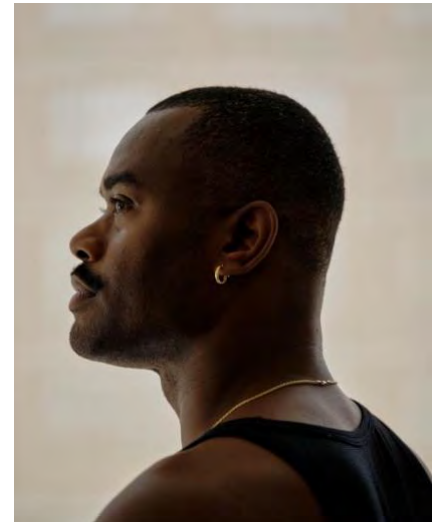
"The story was inspired by a duet in Alvin Ailey's "Blues Suite." There's this sort of tumultuous situation that's happening within that, so I wanted to do a more contemporary take on that in terms of theme, and also movement and vocabulary," Roberts says, about the project. "They're in a lovers' quarrel — and by the end of the piece, she jumps into his arms and they swing off into the wings. So they kind of kiss and make up in the end."

Roberts' work lends itself to conversations about the fixation on Black pain and strife in American film and music — particularly projects that are not helmed by Black artists themselves. Often, art depicting the Black experience fixates on physical and sexual trauma — or it simplifies our culture, devoid of nuance and the complexity of the relationships we cultivate.

That's not to say that period piece films about American slavery or stories about Black grief aren't important. In fact, Roberts has many works that center grief or tragedy.

But pieces such as "In A Sentimental Mood," which shows that Black love can play out onstage without suffering at the center of the story, is not only beautiful but necessary. The project is just one of many examples of the intention Roberts places into his work. And it's proof that Black artists need to be given the space to create work about both joy and despair, and everything else in between.

Roberts describes all romantic relationships — not just Black love — as complicated, and that informs how he shapes a production. "What helped me do that were all the other elements of theater outside of my choreography — the scenic elements, the costuming," he says. "They're dancing on a red carpet, which is symbolic of love, passion and desire. There's





even one moment where the entire piece is flooded with red light. So there is a moment towards the end of the piece where they both kind of see eye-to-eye and come to terms with one another.”

Ultimately, Roberts wants to transport consumers of his work to another place in time, putting them in the headspace to empathize with what’s happening on stage. The Black experience, he reminds me, is multidimensional, and so his work has to be. Another recent project for Alvin Ailey called “Holding Space,” told the story of “radical humility” amid civil unrest and demonstrates the vastness of being Black.

Writers are muses for Roberts, who cites Toni Morrison when he thinks of some of the most powerful influences on his interpretations of love. Her novel, “Paradise,” stands out to him specifically because of its portrayal of female characters; they remind him of the women in his own family. Roberts tells me that he has sometimes drawn from his own family dynamics to help flesh out his stories.



Roberts is part of the Ailey legacy that has always centered Black love in all its iterations. One of the company’s most famous pieces, “Revelations” by Alvin Ailey, utilizes African spirituals and gospel songs to explore both grief and holy joy. Roberts says this story took him back to memories of going to church with his grandmother.

“I grew up going to church with my grandmother all the time, so that entire ballet is so familiar to me, from the hymns that you hear in the music to the costumes that the women wear,” Roberts says. “What was impressive was the way that Alvin was able to capture the essence of church, community, and really the Black experience within that one singular piece. I think that’s a really tough thing to do with dance.”

Roberts is currently working with several ballet companies, blending his background of contemporary and modern style with more methodic movement. It’s both challenging and rewarding, he tells me. And as always, Roberts is observing what’s happening in the real world as he begins to imagine his future projects.

“I always lead with love in a lot of my work, even if it’s not the theme of the actual work — just my love for the dancers who are performing,” he says. “I always try to layer the work so that there’s something really beautiful in it that they can connect to.”

THE CUT

How Alvin Ailey Dancer Constance Stamatiou Gets It Done

By: Brittney Oliver

December 18, 2023



Constance Stamatiou started dancing when she was 5. The Charlotte, North Carolina, native knew at a young age that she wanted to entertain and live in New York City and that dancing could be the catalyst for a career in the spotlight. At 18, she attended the Ailey School, an extensive dance training program, as a fellowship student. She then moved to the Big Apple and joined Ailey II, a junior ensemble for early career dancers. Stamatiou joined the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 2007 and now, in her 12th season with the company, is living out her dreams as a lead dancer and the face of the company's 2023–24 season.

The 39-year-old trains each day to be less prone to injury and keep her stamina over an eight-month-long season of performing. She doesn't feel the need to keep up with the 20-somethings in the industry as the dancing world is evolving, but she's keenly aware of how her own body has changed. She left the company in 2011 to start her family, returning five years later. "When I was younger, it was rare to see a dancer or hear of a dancer who was past their 20s, especially one who has kids," she said. Being a parent and being older was a career ender at the time, but Stamatiou always felt that Alvin Ailey was an exception that embraced older dancers.

Stamatiou takes pride in being a veteran in the dance company. It was overwhelming to figure out how to show up as a mother and wife, retrain her new body for dancing, and maintain her schedule while finding personal time. But she's feeling better about the work she's doing on herself, and it's showing up in her personal and professional life in a big way. "I feel like a leading lady. I'm not trying to mimic other dancers anymore. I feel like I've stepped into my own," she said. Stamatiou lives in New Jersey with her husband and two children. Here's how she gets it done.

On her morning routine:

I wake up at 7 a.m. and usually get the kids up by 7:15. I typically go to Starbucks for breakfast and get a quick egg bite and a croissant. Sometimes, I eat a Spartan Meal Prep that my husband gets, which helps me because I don't have to go out to get food. I'll have oatmeal that's already prepared. Once I drop off the kids, my husband will drop me off at the George Washington Bridge. I can catch a transit bus across and then catch the A train. The commute is all right as long as there's no accident. I can get to work in 30 minutes.

Usually, once I get to Alvin Ailey, I grab the free AM New York newspaper and do the crossword puzzles. After that, I start to warm up. I try to roll out, stretch, and release my muscles. Then, I do a little conditioning to get the muscles awakened again by doing the floor bar, floor pilates, and some Gyrokinesis before the company's ballet class.

On returning to professional dancing after having children:

I was a newlywed, and my husband and I wanted to have kids when I left. During that time, I was missing Ailey. I was still dancing and teaching here and there, but it just felt like something was missing. My heart kept wanting Mr. Ailey's work. It has so much meaning, so much it was therapeutic. That's when my journey to the gym started because, for one, you've got to get your body back after having two kids. It's not the same. Secondly, I'm now in my 30s.

On her exercise routine:

After rehearsal, I will go catch a class for strength training. I'm lifting weights and paying each part of my body some attention. Strength training is excellent for engaging my core and allowing me to balance more. I do a lot of cardio,

especially for dances like Mr. Ailey's Cry. It is a 16-minute solo, and you're on the stage by yourself the entire time. It does not get any easier as you go toward the end. The pace is being brought up and so is your energy. Cardio is essential to build my stamina. If I don't feel like going to the gym, I go to tae kwon do practice. I took an interest in it when I signed my kids up for classes.

On how she unwinds for the day:

If my day is intense and I'm coming home and feel like I can't walk, I'm in the tub with Epsom salt. I also enjoy having quality time with my family because, by the time I wake them up and send them to school, I don't see them until it's time to go to bed. We like to watch TV together as a family or as a couple. The kids are into Goosebumps, and my husband and I watch Loot on Apple TV+ and Black Cake on Hulu.

On how she manages stress:

I grew up disassociating and just not feeling feelings. I saw it was taking a toll on my body, especially with this kind of demanding schedule. I remember there was a period on tour when many feelings were coming to the surface, and I didn't know how to deal with them. It was great to have a bond with other dancers where I could feel vulnerable enough to vent about my feelings. I was encouraged to start therapy, and I've been speaking with my therapist now for about two years. It's been life-changing and life-saving. It's helped me deal with my feelings and honor myself. I do that once a week, even when I'm on tour. Luckily, I can speak to my therapist through Zoom.

On being a parent with a demanding schedule:

My husband had to play Mom and Dad a lot. Luckily, we have FaceTime. I was able to buy books and read to my kids through FaceTime when they were younger. Nowadays, I'm trying to help with homework through FaceTime. It's challenging. My husband knew this was my passion. He also sensed something missing when I wasn't at Ailey. He and I both said we felt that me dancing again made me a better mom. And, of course, my being a mom made me a better dancer. It was really important to me for the kids to see that childhood dreams can come true. As much as I would go through the guilt of being away for so long, I kept trying to remind myself, They see you do something you love and are proud of you.

On the moment she felt she'd "made it":

I was about 20 years old when I got into the company, so I mimicked what the other dancers were doing and did what I was told, being that good girl and just listening. When I left and returned, I was looking for that same thing. Okay, are you gonna tell me what to do? But now Alvin Ailey's under a new direction, and it's a whole new company. I'm one of the oldest dancers, so I have to be able to do it for myself. It finally paid off this year when they told me I was the featured dancer for this year's poster. I've been here for so long; this is the first time I have been honored on a poster. I wasn't expecting it at all.

On advice she would offer her younger self:

To be more confident in myself and my body. Young dancers end up comparing themselves: This person has better feet, or this person can turn more than I can. We start picking away at ourselves and chipping away at our confidence. That shows in your dance, and you try to hide instead of being vulnerable. I remember being young and my peers had so many opinions about how I should hold my body and move. You end up losing awareness of your own body. But no one can tell you how to move your body because all of our bodies are different. That's the investigation you must do for yourself, and I wish I had been more independent, stronger, and confident to do that earlier. The investigation should never stop, so even if I felt like I made it, I have to continue to study and continue to experiment because who knows how far this body can go?

On the people who help her get it done:

My husband first, and then my kids because they drive me to strive for greatness. I do it for them because I want to be an example. Regarding my time at Ailey, my first director, Ms. Judith Jamison, is a legend. When she comes into the room, everybody pulls up. Then my assistant director, Matthew Rushing, and rehearsal director, Ronni Favors: Matthew helped guide me into the discipline I have now and into becoming a lead dancer; Ronni has seen me grow, and sometimes I look to her when I need a shoulder to cry on and a therapy session.

The New York Times

Ailey's New Secret Weapon: The Heroically Unmannered James Gilmer

By: Gia Kourlas

December 13, 2021

NEWS | CRITICISM

MONDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2021

Arts
The New York Times



Bringing His Own Drama Onstage

Alvin Ailey's new secret weapon is the heroically unmannered James Gilmer.

By GIA KOURLAS

December is never a breeze for an Alvin Ailey dancer, but recently — amid rehearsals and with a performance looming that evening — James Gilmer found himself in an empty closet on the studio side of New York City Center. Armed with a late lunch, he was using his only break of the day for an interview. But as he sees it, it's better not to waste time.

Omicron is not just looming. It's here. Even Gilmer's plans to attend a dance performance just after Thanksgiving were thwarted: Complexions canceled the second half of its season at the Joyce Theater after breakthrough cases of Covid-19 were detected among the dancers. So when it comes to his position at Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Gilmer has perspective.

"I'm continuing to be very cautious, and I'm not letting any day pass without remembering that it's such a gift," he said. "As much as it's an opportunity and a privilege to perform onstage already, it's even more so now."

Gilmer, 28, a member of Ailey since June 2019, has reason to feel both grateful and a little hesitant. After he joined the company — it took him two auditions — he moved to Harlem from San Francisco, where he had been performing with ODC/Dance and Amy Seiwert's Imagery. He settled into "Revelations" after learning the Ailey masterwork from the veteran dancer and associate artistic director, Matthew Rushing. ("An incredibly dear experience," Gilmer

James Gilmer, at the Ailey studios on West 55th Street, is "really nimble in all senses of the word," a colleague says.

NATE PALMER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Bringing His Own Drama Onstage

CONTINUED FROM PAGE C1

said.) He went on an international tour with the company, and finished his first season at City Center. But then the pandemic hit.

What was it like to finally get the job and then have to go into lockdown? Gilmer still might have been getting his bearings, but it was clear from the start that he was a stand-out.

Stuck at home, unable to perform, he did a lot of yoga, which he had become devoted to while living in California. "To feel like my body was my own," he said, "I really needed to center using that practice."

But Gilmer's first serious dance language was ballet. Somewhat unusually for an Ailey dancer, he had an impressive career before he arrived at the company. Classically trained from an early age — he studied in his hometown, at Pittsburgh Ballet Theater School — Gilmer spent six seasons with Cincinnati Ballet, where he attained the rank of soloist.

A strong partner who, at 6 feet 2, fills the stage with a special kind of grandeur, Gilmer is almost heroically unmannered — his dancing has an ease, a looseness that can be rare in ballet dancers. Robert Battle, Ailey's artistic director, recalled being struck by his size and agility, along with his versatility.

"I remember asking a friend of mine in California, 'What's he like?' And it was, 'Oh, he's no drama, he's easygoing, but really gifted.'"

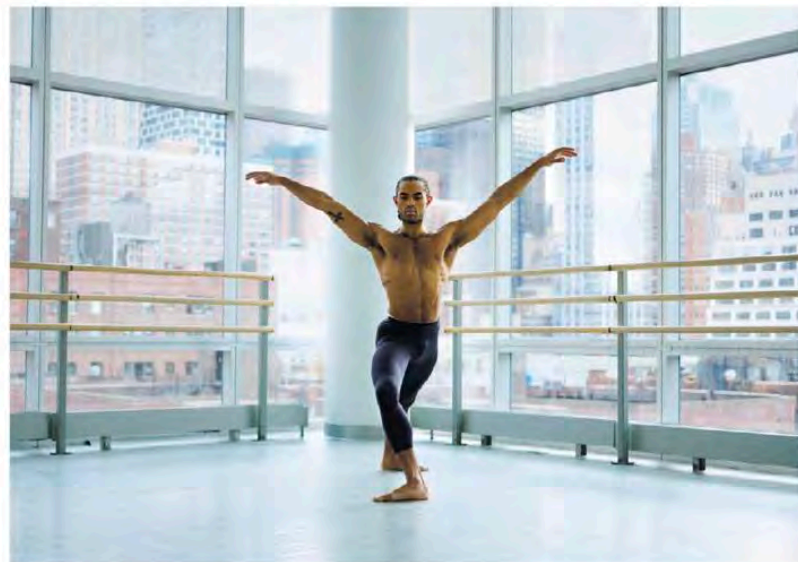
Battle admires Gilmer's noble bearing and what he called "a genuine heart."

"He's really nimble in all senses of the word," he added, "which is usually just meaning flexible. But I mean something a little more soulful: He's not a peacock, you know? He's very much about the work and about giving himself over to the work in such a wonderful and beautiful way."

Gilmer *could* be a peacock: With his elegant carriage and line, and his scrupulous technique, he could veer toward a more aloof place as a performer — or be a show-off. "He has a wonderful economy with how he shows his colors — his feathers if you will," Battle said. "He's able to meet the



PHOTOGRAPHS BY NATE PALMER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



'Even when I started focusing on ballet, there was a part of me that always wanted Ailey.'

JAMES GILMER



challenges of the different choreographers that come in because he's so open."

Battle was struck when coaching him in Aszure Barton's "Busk" with how Gilmer listened. "His whole body is an ear," Battle said. "You get an immediate response to what it is you're asking him to do. And that may seem simple, but believe me, it isn't."

Gilmer first saw the Ailey company perform when he was around 9 or 10. He was always a fan. "Even when I started focusing on ballet, there was a part of me that always wanted Ailey and always kind of dreamed of Ailey," he said.

For Gilmer, being an Ailey dancer has to do with being able to convey a story, something he said he has wanted to do onstage his whole life. Finding the drama — and his own personal drama — within a classic Ai-

James Gilmer loosening up in a dance studio at Alvin Ailey. He said that his parents signed him up for dance classes because he was always moving. Now, he sees his role as an Ailey dancer who is able to convey a story.

ley role is not the same thing as being a prince in ballet.

While in Cincinnati, Gilmer performed in works by George Balanchine and contemporary choreographers, as well as dancing leading classical parts in "Cinderella," "The Nutcracker" and "Romeo and Juliet." (He played Tybalt. "Dying onstage," he said, flashing a quick grin. "So fun.")

When he left to dance in California, he hadn't planned on abandoning ballet entirely. But he wanted to transition out of a company that was so focused on full-length story ballets. "With their usual narratives and characterizations, although fun to perform," he said, "I was left feeling unseen and somewhat unexpressed as a person and artist."

Gilmer wanted more than "tights-and-a-

unic kind of roles," he said. "I could also feel myself being pulled to find a place where there were more bodies like mine, not just Black but long limbed, athletic, versatile dancer bodies."

He loved working for Victoria Morgan, Cincinnati Ballet's artistic director, calling her "a very visionary type of a boss." He loves working with women in general, he said, including Twyla Tharp, who cast him in the premiere of "Second Duet" opposite Jacquelin Harris, also of Ailey, for her "Twyla Now" program at City Center. During the working process — it was extensive — Tharp told him to train like a boxer.

What did that mean? "Footwork," he said. "Having a sense of lightness on the floor. It's being able to move in any direction and how that correlates to your core and where

things are releasing and also inhabiting your body onstage. Being able to just be in your bones and muscles. And that's the performance."

Is that why his feet were especially lithe and lively in "Lazarus," a hip-hop work by Rennie Harris, this season? He was so grounded, so relaxed despite, at times, the choreography's breakneck speed. Yet Gilmer's performance, particularly in the dance's more dramatic moments, wasn't exterior, but interior: private, resolute, haunting.

That may have had something to do with Tharp, too, who coached him in both his dancing and his acting. "To learn from someone of that caliber after so much time away from dance was really satisfying that huge void and that urgency to create and to get moving again," Gilmer said. "I've been able to really take that and run with it with everything. There are obviously certain ways of training, but there's so much that she made me realize that I can take into any dancing space and really transform the way that I perform."

He laughed. "She's so cool," he said. "I hope that that wasn't it." (It likely won't be; at the very least, Battle plans on bringing "Second Duet" into the Ailey repertory.)

In thinking about why dance became such an important part of his life — Gilmer said his parents signed him up for classes because he was always moving — he considers his upper-middle-class upbringing and how much privilege goes into becoming a professional dancer. "When you have two parents as a Black person, and you're able to grow up in a Victorian-style home with your own bedroom and a living room and a second floor and a third floor and having the availability to move around," he said. "Like physically move my body through space and run up and down stairs. And the yard: having a front yard, having a backyard."

He grew up, essentially, in a world of space, and that gave him a restless spirit: "I feel it generating within me," he said. "It always drew me back to the studio."

As a dancer, Gilmer wants to share it, to be, like the women he's worked with, as generous as possible. "It also almost elevates the responsibility because I've been given so incredibly much," he said. "So to give it back to the audience in that way is really all I ever intend to do."

By: Robyn Grant-Moran

January 28, 2023 (Online 1/27/23)

Canadian dancer looks to inspire the next generation

Ontarian Hannah Alissa Richardson returns to Toronto with the theatre that made her feel seen as a racialized performer

ROBYN GRANT-MORAN

Hannah Alissa Richardson first saw the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater at Toronto's Meridian Hall at 12 years old, 12 years ago. Dancing since age three, and already active in the competitive circuit, Richardson had never seen so many BIPOC dancers on stage at once. Born to Trinidadian and Filipino parents and growing up in Vaughan, Ont., Richardson says prior to that night, "I was used to being the only person of colour on stage, I thought that was just normal."

When Alvin Ailey returns to Toronto's Meridian Hall this February, Richardson won't be there in the audience — she'll be on stage as the sole Canadian in her inaugural season with the company.

Alvin Ailey (1931-1989) created his eponymous company in 1958 to preserve and celebrate African-American dance and culture. Since its genesis, the New York-based company has enriched and expanded the definitions of modern American dance as a whole, inspiring and eventually training generations of dancers with the establishment of what is now the Ailey School.

Seeing works by Ailey and the best contemporary African-American choreographers and dancers in the company was nothing short of life changing for the young Richardson. On a phone call from New York between costume fittings and rehearsals, she chokes up as she relives the joy she experienced seeing the company on stage, and the pride in now being one of it dancers, perhaps inspiring the next generation.

Not long after that fateful night, Richardson auditioned for



Hannah Alissa Richardson, seen performing in Francesca Harper's *Freedom Series*, has been dancing since she was three years old. She will be the sole Canadian performer in her inaugural season with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater when it visits Toronto in early February. ERIN BAIANO

a summer intensive program at the Ailey School. She was accepted, though her competition schedule would not permit her to attend until she was 14. "It was my first time really leaving Canada and travelling," says Richardson, recounting that month in New York, where she now spends plenty of time. "My parents traded weekends to come stay with me."

After finishing high school, Richardson joined the prestigious full-time program at the Ailey School, graduating with honours in 2019. Richardson then danced with Ailey II, the bridging program for dancers between school and a company position.

It was there where rehearsal director Ronni Favors gave Richard-

son and classmates a powerful bit of advice: "Be a sponge" when it comes to learning. "Absorb all the information."

Richardson continues, "Not only from the people in the front of the room but from your co-workers, peers that you're dancing beside. Absorb information from outside of the elite; from students' shows, plays and commercials, because there's always something to learn. Grab a little something from everybody and put it in your toolbox to use for the future." It's a teaching that Richardson still abides by, committed to continuously learning and improving.

The current show's Saturday evening bill includes Ailey and

Mary Barnett's *Survivors*, a tribute to Nelson and Winnie Mandela, Ailey's seminal work *Revelations* and MacArthur Fellow Kyle Abraham's *Are You in Your Feelings?* Richardson describes Abraham's 32-minute work as a mixtape that elevates and celebrates, featuring the music of Kendrick Lamar, Erykah Badu, Maxwell and Drake to name a few. The pairing of contemporary dance with modern-day R&B, hip-hop and soul music is what makes this piece so exciting for Richardson. "Just seeing the two go hand in hand, it's really beautiful, really fun and really entertaining to watch."

This full circle moment in Richardson's career comes in part thanks to the "village" that sup-

ported her: her parents, brothers, friends, boyfriend. "You can do it by yourself, but what's the point of being successful with no one to share it with?"

Richardson's final words of advice to aspiring dancers in the audience where she was 12 years ago: Just because the professionals make it look effortless, it isn't. "Not everything's going to be easy, the challenges are great ... to get to where you want to be, you've got to fall in love with hard work, and don't give up."

Special to The Globe and Mail

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is returning to Toronto's Meridian Hall Feb. 3 and 4.

By: J.M. Banks

July 24, 2023

K.C. native lands spot in prestigious N.Y. dance company

BY J.M. BANKS
jbanks@kcstar.com

As De'Anthony Vaughan concludes another long day at dance rehearsal, he navigates his way through the bright lights, bustling crowds and honking horns of New York City. One thing is for sure, he is not on Vine Street anymore.

For many of us, working at our dream job is a far-off fantasy; for Vaughan, his lifelong ambition of becoming a member of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater became a reality earlier this month.

"I was ecstatic. I am still in

shock. I was overwhelmed, but I am still so happy," says Vaughan, a Kansas City native. "My family is more excited than me. I feel like I was still processing it and they were crying and happy because everyone knows it has always been a dream of mine."

Vaughan, 30, is a product of Kansas City's Friends of Alvin Ailey Youth Camp and a testament to the resources the year-round program provides. Now in its 39th year, the Friends of Alvin Ailey Foundation has been the second home for the prestigious dance company,

SEE VAUGHAN, 5A



KENT BAKER Kent Baker Studio

De'Anthony Vaughan performs a dance with Sierra Jones while dancing with the Dallas Black Dance Theatre.

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VAUGHAN

bridging the main organization in New York with Kansas City.

"Honestly, if it wasn't for them, I would not be where I am today," says Vaughan, who started taking dance courses with Alvin Ailey in middle school. "When I got to the program it introduced me to other styles and other males who are doing it, and it inspired me."

Encouraged by his grandmother to get involved with dance, Vaughan remembers how lonely it was as a boy. He credits the Ailey Youth Camp with putting him in front of men in the field who encouraged him.

"I have had some great teachers through my years at Alvin Ailey," says the

graduate of the now-closed Brookside-Frontier Math and Science School. "Growing up and being a male in the industry, there is not a lot of us and I had teachers who motivated me and saw that it was possible."

Vaughan attended the camp from 2007 to 2011. After graduating high school, he was accepted into the Alvin Ailey Summer Intensive Program, which allowed him to travel to New York for training the next four summers.

Vaughan has performed in the Dallas Black Dance Theatre for the last nine years. He entered the grueling audition process for Alvin Ailey's main company in March.

Hundreds of high-caliber dancers were given a ballet routine which they only had minutes to learn and perform in front of a panel of judges with no errors.

Vaughan learned in April that he was selected; however, he could only announce it this month. But it was tough for the dancer to keep tight-lipped.

Like other staff at the Friends of Alvin Ailey, Melanie Miller, chief executive officer, says Vaughan's selection into the main company is, of course, the best-case scenario. But that isn't the main goal.

"We don't always expect them all to go off to become world class dancers," says Miller. "It is always wonderful if they do, but what we are really trying to do is create good people who are responsib-

le and lead productive lives. And if they happen to fall in love with dance, that is just the cherry on top."

The foundation offers two youth camps: a six-week summer course and another from October to May. The goal is to use dance, music and creative writing to teach critical life skills.

The program is free for students living in the Kansas City and Kansas City, Kansas school district boundaries who are ages 11 to 14 and in fifth through eighth grades.

The camp provides resources, such as outfits, food and transportation to locations at Lincoln Middle School, 2012 E. 23rd St., and Carl B. Bruce Middle School, 2100 N. 18th St. in Kansas City, Kansas.

"Our mission is to make dance accessible to all, be

a presenter of dance in the community, teach art education for youth and diversity. Those are three things I am very passionate about," she says.

Miller has worked the past four years to promote the decades-old program but says it's a struggle to get youth, especially young boys, interested.

"We visit schools and go to community centers to meet people where they are at," she says. "We do have a small number of boys, and it has been really important for us to try to introduce dance to boys and to say it is OK to love dance and it is actually pretty cool."

Last year the camp introduced a Thursday dance course aimed at boys, teaching them the athletic intricacies of dance and how that carries over into sports, Miller said.

With next year marking the 40th anniversary for the Friends of Alvin Ailey, Miller believes success stories like Vaughan's will only help to convince more youth of the possibilities of a future in dance.

Vaughan is now preparing for a European tour. After years of hard work, discipline and countless nights of aching feet, he hopes the Kansas City dance scene will grow.

"It is all about staying focused and present," says Vaughan. "I feel like I did have a lot of teachers who made sure I knew what it took to get here, and if you work hard everything will follow."

For information on the programs, visit kcfaa.com/aileycamp.

The New York Times

[Spotlight Gets Brighter For an Ailey Dancer](#)

By: Siobhan Burke

December 9, 2022 (Online: 12/7/22)

Spotlight Gets Brighter For an Ailey Dancer

Jacquelin Harris is expanding her repertoire, with role debuts in store for the latest season.

By SIOBHAN BURKE

During a recent free hour after her morning class, before afternoon rehearsals and an evening performance, the dancer Jacquelin Harris was brushing up on some familiar material. It was the third day of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's season at New York City Center, 27 shows in three and a half weeks — a marathon, as always, for the troupe's 31 dancers.

Harris, who joined the company in 2014, had been expecting to perform in Alvin Ailey's "Pas de Duke" — originally a star vehicle for Judith Jamison and Mikhail Baryshnikov — in mid-December. But she had been summoned into the role earlier to replace

an injured colleague.

Fortunately, she already knew it inside and out. To the effervescent horns of the Duke Ellington music, she swept across a City Center studio with bladelike leaping turns. As if buoyed by a gust of air, her body sprang into a layout, one leg kicking up as her torso arched back ecstatically. When Matthew Rushing, Ailey's associate artistic director, asked her to repeat one step, she anticipated his feedback, applying it before he even said it out loud.

"You took my note; you knew the note!" Rushing said, and they both burst into laughter. He offered a few other suggestions by way of fine-tuning, or, as he put it, "I'm being petty because it's so great." The coaching session ended 20 minutes early.

At 30, and with a decade of Ailey experience behind her, Harris has emerged as a quietly confident, eminently capable star

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NATE PALMER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Jacquelin Harris joined Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 2014.

Spotlight Gets Brighter For an Ailey Dancer

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among the company's current roster, a dancer of transfixing technical ability and ever-deepening expressive range. She is as grounded as she is electrifying, whether shape-shifting under a disco ball in Aszure Barton's "Busk" or leading the solemn, prayerful opening section of the classic "Revelations."

"She's a little bit unflappable," Robert Battle, the Ailey company's artistic director, said in an interview. "I used to say: 'Does she know how to get tired? Run out of breath onstage?' It's amazing, it really is."

He recalled seeing Harris years ago in Ailey II, where she was a member before joining the main company, "and immediately gravitating to her energy, her vibe — her sense of seeming carefree, yet like a missile," he said. "She's direct in the movement. You know exactly what she wants you to see, and that takes a lot of control. She's a natural."

This season, Harris expands her repertoire with several new roles. Her current schedule includes debuts in Twyla Tharp's exuberant "Roy's Joys," a company premiere opening on Friday; Kyle Abraham's "Are You in Your Feelings?," a new piece fueled by a hip-hop, soul and R&B playlist; and Paul Taylor's pared-down "Duet." If you've seen Ailey ads around town, you might recognize Harris as this year's poster girl, gesturing skyward and wrapped in gold.

But her steady, ready-for-anything disposition has also taken her beyond the Ailey fold. Over the past few years, she has been a standout in projects of the Merce Cunningham Trust — most notably "Night of 100 Solos," the multicity event honoring what would have been Cunningham's 100th birthday — and in two programs of Tharp's choreography at City Center, as part of a cast of ballet and modern-dance luminaries hand-picked by Tharp.

"She's one of the finest dancers in New York right now," said Patricia Lent, the Cunningham Trust's licensing director, who worked closely with Harris in preparation for "Night of 100 Solos." That was Harris's first journey into Cunningham's convoluted movement, but you wouldn't have known it, Lent said: "She inhabited the work like it was just waiting for her."

"She does everything accurately and clearly — she does what she's taught to do," Lent added. "But then she finds places within the work to push it and extend it, in a way that people who have worked with Merce for a very long time have learned to do."



KATE PALMER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



PAUL KOLBE

Left, Jacquelin Harris, the literal poster girl for the Ailey dance company. Below left, from left, Harris with James Gilmer and Chalvar Monteiro in "Roy's Joys."

Bachelor of Fine Arts program between the Ailey School and Fordham University.

Adept with numbers, she began pursuing a double major in dance and mathematics. Her touring schedule with Ailey II, which she joined in her senior year, prevented her from completing all the courses for her math degree. But, Battle said, her numerical inclinations still show up in the studio, especially when it comes to deciphering complex music.

"She has this wonderful mathematical mind, and I think she applies that as she receives information," Battle said. "You watch her figure it out, almost like a Rubik's cube." When she's presented with an unpredictable rhythmic pattern, he said, "her eyes light up." (During the depths of the pandemic, Harris passed the time taking a free online course about quantum physics, she said; she also loves a good jigsaw puzzle.)

More challenging for Harris is what she called "an element of character work that we do a lot here, where you have to pull something outside of yourself and bring it into the work, to take it to that next level." Mining that kind of motivation, she said, "to the point where it projects onstage, and shows through my body — that takes more exploration, which keeps it interesting."

If anyone can stretch a dancer of unassailable skill to new heights, it's the exacting Tharp. "I love working with Twyla," Harris said. "If everything permits, I'll work for her as many times as she calls me."

In both of her projects with Tharp outside the Ailey company, Harris has performed with her fellow Ailey dancer James Gilmer: last year in "Second Duet," a work of uncompromising physical demands and mutually heroic partnering, and this year in the scintillating "Softly as I Leave You," from "Nine Sinatra Songs," which also requires extreme trust between partners.

As Harris's other half in these works, Gilmer has been drawn to her fearlessness onstage, "the abandonment in her dancing," he said. In "Softly," which the two reprised at the Ailey gala this year, "she just goes for it every time and trusts me so much. We rock it out, and it's really fun."

Harris is now in the process of learning Ailey's celebrated "Cry," a solo that's something of a rite of passage for women in the company, dedicated to "all Black women everywhere — especially our mothers." And while she doesn't plan to retire anytime soon, she is laying the groundwork for when that day comes. In January, she'll begin remote courses in a program of Columbia University's nursing school, which offers prerequisites for degrees in various health professions.

Still, she's staying curious and open about where her path could lead.

"Maybe I'll start learning microbiology," she said, "and decide I want to go do something completely different."

To an extent, Harris, who has a reserved but assured demeanor, recognizes a certain facility within herself: the effortless way that some of her colleagues speak of. In an interview at the Ailey headquarters in Midtown, between rehearsal sessions, she reflected on the perception that she easily picks up new material.

"I feel like my body can naturally do" — she said before pausing to consider her words, placing both hands on her torso and smiling, as if in gratitude. "My body holds me down."

Harris, who is from Charlotte, N.C., took her first dance class when she was just 2. She trained for competitions (and for fun) at a local studio, Dance Productions, then moved to New York to study in the joint

Feeling the Beat

By: Courtney Celeste Spears

May/June 2019 Issue

DANCER TO DANCER
● *off the record*



Samantha Figgins

FEELING *the Beat*

As told to Courtney Celeste Spears

How Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Samantha Figgins' hearing loss has affected her dancing

Samantha Figgins is currently in her fifth season with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (and was a Dance Spirit cover girl back in 2013!). But what many people don't know is that the gorgeous dancer suffers from single-sided deafness. As a baby, Figgins contracted spinal meningitis, which caused her to lose all hearing in her right ear. She never gave up on her dance dreams, though, and fought her way through uncomfortable situations, never missing an opportunity to learn and grow. Now, after getting her first pair of hearing aids, she opens up about her path to success. —Courtney Celeste Spears

I come from an artistic family: I'm one of four girls, and all of us (including my twin sister, Jenelle) are dancers. While we were growing up in DC, my mother put my oldest sister in dance first, but I eventually fell in love with it, too. I studied at Duke Ellington School of the Arts and later attended SUNY Purchase Conservatory. I danced and toured with Complexions Contemporary Ballet for four years, before joining Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. I'm filled with so much joy and gratitude to

be where I am, especially now, as I'm able to reflect back on my journey, and the work it took to overcome a disability that could've held me back from my dreams.

When I was 10 months old, I had spinal meningitis, which put me in the hospital for 10 weeks and caused me to lose all hearing in my right ear. Ever since, I've lived with single-sided deafness, which in time turned into auditory processing disorder (APD)—when the brain has difficulty processing speech.



Samantha (in red) with her twin sister, Jenelle, in sixth grade



Performing at the Kennedy Center in high school during her residency with Dance Theatre of Harlem

It was hard growing up with single-sided deafness. I found myself not fully invested in conversations because I couldn't understand what was being said. It made me more of an introvert, because it was exhausting trying to play catch-up. Conversations would feel like fill-in-the-blank puzzles, where I'd have to rely on body language, context clues, or hand gestures to figure out what I was missing.

I did know one thing: I loved to dance. It saved me. Without dance, it would've been easier for me to be less interactive and less engaged with those around me. But dance made me focus. It made me an observant, hard worker. My disability fueled me to be the best dancer I could be.

This past year, I got my first pair of hearing aids. It's completely changed my interactions, the way I'm able to be present myself, and the way I approach my dancing. I used to get anxious when a teacher or choreographer was speaking, afraid I'd

DANCER TO DANCER *off the record*

miss something important. Even standing at the barre on my right side would make me uneasy. My hearing aids have opened my world in so many ways—from things like feeling more balanced when dancing to being excited about conversations and interactions. But it's become clear to me that my work ethic and constant goal of perfection is what made me strong, resilient, and got me here today.

Being open about my journey with hearing loss has allowed me to share my story with my co-workers, my mentee who also suffers from single-sided deafness, and other dancers in the community. Dancing with AAADT has been a dream, and has afforded me the opportunity to connect to a greater purpose. Looking back, I wouldn't call my hearing loss a curse. It's ultimately been a blessing. I'm constantly reminded that I'm perfect the way I am.

To any young person who may be suffering from deafness, I encourage you to always believe in yourself and trust in the gift you've been given. Small obstacles are always a gift, because they build your strength. Don't give in to your insecurities. Take whatever you've been given and make it shine—because your story is one that needs to be shared. **DS**

● Courtney Celeste Spears is a dancer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and a graduate of the Ailey/Fordham BFA program in dance.



(Third from left)
Performing Wayne
McGregor's *Kanros* with Alvin
Ailey American Dance Theater

[FROM TOP] ANDREW ECCLES; COURTESY SAMANTHA FIGGINS; [2] COURTESY SAMANTHA FIGGINS; PAUL KOLNIK, COURTESY ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

SHAPE

Shine On! The Amazing Body Benefits of Sweat

By: Tula Karras

December 2021 Issue

SHINE ON

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
RICHARD PHIBBS

With each glistening drop of sweat, your body is benefiting both inside and out, with stronger immunity, greater endurance, and smoother skin. The latest science explains why you want to steam things up.
by Tula Karras

Our bodies
are always
sweating a
bit, whether
we sense it or
not, partly to
keep our skin
hydrated.

MEET THE AMAZING DANCERS IN MOTION

The grace and grit you see on these pages owes to the artistry of four stars of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (opening image, from left): Khalia Campbell, Constance Stamatiou, Solomon Dumas, and James Gilmer. December marks the storied company's return to live performances in its home theater in New York, with a national tour to over 20 cities kicking off on January 25. For the latest news and how to see these dancers in performance, follow @alvinailey or visit alvinailey.org.

People who are
fitter actually
sweat more.
That means
they can often
exercise longer
and more
comfortably.



Amazing Grace – Still, We Dance: An Ode to the Deliverance and Joy of Self-Expression

By: Kibwe Chase-Marshall

September 2020 Issue





JADE SWIM SWIMSUIT (\$220);
SALVATORE FERRAGAMO SKIRT
(\$20,300); MARCO BICEGO BRACELET
(\$15,000) AND RINGS (FROM \$4,290)

Khali Campbell, James Glimmer, and Samantha Figgins are dancers with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.
ON KHALI CAMPBELL: JADE SWIM SWIMSUIT (\$220); PRADA SKIRT (\$6,100); MANSUR GAVRIEL FLATS (\$375); JENNIFER FISHER CUFF (\$70); ON JAMES GLIMMER: BRUNELLO CUCINELLI SUIT
(\$8,745); DOLCE & GABBANA SHOES (\$825); ON SAMANTHA FIGGINS: JADE SWIM SKINI TOP (\$100); PRADA SKIRT (\$1,830); MARGAUX FLATS (\$445); BULGARI RINGS (FROM \$1,400)



Every year, in theaters and concert halls around the globe, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater takes audiences to church. Not just any house of worship, but the working-class, Black, Southern temples of rural Texas. The gospel they see and feel is *Revelations*, the company's signature dance, which has been staged more often than the troupe's other celebrated works, for some 25 million fans.

This year *Revelations* turns 60, and it has lost none of its incantatory power. Against the backdrop of both a global pandemic that disproportionately ravages communities of color and the urgency of social justice movements including Black Lives Matter, Ailey's valentine to the spirituals of his youth is its own call to action, an ode to the deliverance of self-expression in the face of adversity.

"Ailey's dance language is ecstatic and virtuosic, and his choreography has given generations of Black dancers a world of complex movement and emotion to inhabit," says the critic Margo Jefferson. As a young woman Debbie Allen saw *Revelations*, and it was a watershed moment. "It was the permission I needed to throw away my pointe shoes and kick-ball-change to that which I could really express," she tells *T&C*. Decades later Khalia Campbell, 27—who appears in this story alongside her Ailey colleagues Samantha Figgins, 31, and James Gilmer, 27—was also mesmerized.

"There were people on the stage who looked like me," Campbell recalls of the performances she saw as a student. "I was able to experience what my ancestors went through, and I was able to see it through movement."

That sense of history's long arc is not just an element of *Revelations*; it is woven into the fabric of a company born out of the civil rights movement to offer hope, strength, and the balm of beauty. Ailey was 29 when he choreographed the piece, and he intended it as a tribute to an elder, his mother, and the music they listened to at Mount Olive Baptist Church during the Depression, and also to his spiritual forebears, the writers Langston Hughes and James Baldwin. Ailey was also inspired by the range of talents around him in the late '50s and early '60s, such as the gospel singer Brother John Sellers.

"Everybody was in bloom then," recalls the great dancer Carmen de Lavallade, who had been Ailey's friend since middle school and was his duet partner in *Revelations*, which was first staged at the 92nd Street Y.

**"DANCERS DON'T
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WILL BE CREATIVE,
AND WE WILL MAKE IT
THROUGH THIS."
— ROBERT BATTLE**

Two years later they were on the road, traveling through Australia and South Asia, and she would begin to cement her reputation as one of the matriarchs of an extremely exclusive club that mastered movement's dynamic capacity for storytelling. The coterie of *Revelations* alumni reads like a who's who of contemporary dance greats: Donna Wood, Sylvia Waters, the late Miguel Godreau, and Dwight Rhoden and Desmond Richardson, the founders of the elite dance company Complexions Contemporary Ballet. Ailey artistic director emerita Judith Jamison says they all brought something new to their roles, as will their successors, and in that, too, there is a message. "We have been and

continue to be triumphant," she says. "We have many more bridges to cross, and we will cross them."

When a younger dancer like Campbell performs the rippling Yanvalou torso undulations of the umbrella woman role made famous by Jamison, she knows she's not just taking up a part, she's inhabiting an heirloom. Campbell's long-legged athleticism and richly hued mahogany skin evoke Jamison's impossibly long lines, and the younger dancer relishes carrying that torch, and the responsibility of presenting Black audiences with the affirming experience of beholding Black performers. "As a Black woman living in America, I was able to relate. *Revelations* talks about how we carry these burdens, but there is still hope, and that's what allows us to persevere," she says.

Like every major arts organization, Ailey was roiled by the coronavirus crisis, forced to cut short its season and instead broadcast repertory works and a new piece online, on social media and its Ailey All Access

free streaming platform. Its annual season at New York City Center, where its best-known ballet would have had pride of place this December, is on hold as of press time out of concern for the safety of both audience and performers.

Dancers, though, are an undeterred crew, and Ailey's turned their cramped apartments and sprawling yards into makeshift stages to record performances for YouTube. They are joyous and defiant and ultimately liberating, an ethos of resilience that runs through *Revelations* and much of the Ailey oeuvre. "Dancers don't do this because it's their job," says artistic director Robert Battle. "They do it because it's their passion; it's the essence of who they are. So they will be creative, and we will be creative, and we will make it through this." **T&C**



SALVATORE FERRAGAMO DRESS (\$26,400); JADE SWIM BANDEAU (\$90) AND SWIM BOTTOM (\$90); MARGAUX FLATS (\$145); DAVID YURMAN BRACELET (\$10,000)



AREA TOP: JENNIFER FISHER CLIFT
(\$295); MANSUR GAVRIEL PLATS
(\$375). FOR DETAILS SEE PAGE 91



Hair by Aisha Williams for TSD Hair. Makeup by
Jennifer Nam for Mac Cosmetics at Honey Artists.
Location courtesy of Central Park Conservancy.

FINANCIAL TIMES

Alvin Ailey documentary divines the choreographer's 'blood memories'

By: Laura Cappelle

December 22, 2021

The life and work of the choreographer are illuminated in archive footage and his own words



It's a little embarrassing, as a dance critic, to realise how little you know about the life of one of the biggest names in American choreography. Yet in the case of Alvin Ailey, there are reasons for that. His company Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater became, and remains, a worldwide phenomenon, ensuring that his artistic legacy lives on, yet obscuring the struggles and burdens of the man behind the work.



A new documentary directed by Jamila Wignot, simply titled *Ailey*, highlights that paradox from the get-go. It opens in 1988 with a triumphant Ailey receiving his country's highest artistic distinction, a Kennedy Center Honor for lifetime contribution to American culture, with Ronald and Nancy Reagan leading the ovation. A life-affirming scene from 1960's *Revelations*, one of the landmark dance works of the 20th century, follows. Yet in private Ailey was already ailing, and less than a year later he died of Aids-related illness at 58.



The cause of his death wasn't disclosed at the time, with obituaries referring only to "a rare blood disease". In *Ailey*, Wignot lovingly goes back and forth between the man and the choreography, the loneliness of being a black figurehead in modern dance and the external demands of success.

The film has a compelling narrator: Ailey himself, speaking in interviews he recorded in the last year of his life, when he was working on an autobiography with A Peter Bailey. (The result, *Revelations*, was published posthumously in 1995.) The tapes are often remarkably candid, covering topics including Ailey's homosexuality, which he never made public during his life.

Other talking heads fill in the gaps, with close collaborators including his early stage partner Carmen de Lavallade, and Judith Jamison, who went on to direct the company after Ailey's death. There is archive footage of his choreography, too, from *Revelations* to a handful of lesser-known works, such as 1969's *Masekela Langage*.



Wignot, an award-winning director whose previous work includes the documentary series *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross* and the Emmy-nominated *Makers: Women in Business*, says she was approached by the production company Insignia Films to work on *Ailey*. While she had followed his company since first seeing them in college, she admits she knew little about the choreographer. "It's a film that found me," she says.



By coincidence, when Wignot approached Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater about making a documentary, the ensemble was about to create a new work inspired by the life of Ailey for its 60th anniversary. Footage from rehearsals of Rennie Harris's two-act *Lazarus*, which had its premiere in 2018, is peppered throughout the film, as a contemporary echo of Ailey's story.



“What was so great was to spend time working with dance material, and seeing how far we could push the visual language to communicate something in a film,” Wignot says.

“Sometimes in documentary there is an expectation on the part of the audience that they’ll be told everything. We rejected that from the start.”



Ailey, a child of the Great Depression era, was born in Texas in 1931. In the voiceover he recalls his beloved mother working in the fields, and his memories of picking cotton as a child. But, visually, Wignot had to get creative to represent his early life. “He’s not a person who had a trove of home movie footage,” she says wryly

She and her team turned to footage shot by pioneering anthropologist [Zora Neale Hurston](#) as well as video clips of ordinary black life in mid-century America — material that wasn’t readily available until recently. “In the last 10 years, there’s been an incredible effort to preserve those materials and to make them accessible,” Wignot says, referencing archives at Duke University and in Texas. “I don’t know that this film could have been made a decade ago.”



Here the documentary expands on what Ailey calls “blood memories — the memories of my parents, uncles and aunts, the blues and the gospel songs that I knew from Texas”. They shaped his choreography, bringing a distinct expression of black culture to the modern dance stage, which was then a mostly white art form. (Exceptions include Katherine Dunham, whose dancing Ailey recalls in the film with still-fresh wonder.) His first hit, 1958’s *Blues Suite*, was inspired by the social dances he witnessed at black honky-tonks in the South.

As his company has increasingly staged pieces by a long list of new choreographers since its founder’s death, the list of Ailey works still actively performed has narrowed. The uplifting *Revelations*, with its gospel and blues vignettes inspired by Ailey’s childhood, may have obscured other strands of the choreographer’s work: it is fascinating to see in Ailey the punchy original ending of *Masekela Langage*, which was inspired by the assassination of Black Panther activist Fred Hampton.

In a scene that was later cut, a dead character lies in the arms of the other dancers, and a recorded voice repeats over and over: “Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.” “It shows that he was paying close attention to the more radical wings of black politics in the country,” Wignot says.

Yet at the same time, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater found international success due to tours set up by the US state department, which regularly sent the company overseas as part of cultural diplomacy efforts. That put Ailey in a complex position as a black man whose success others were keen to appropriate; the film also shows that the company’s growth often left him exhausted and isolated by the pressure to keep up the stream of new works. His mental health took a turn for the worse in 1980, when he was affected by what is understood today as bipolar disorder.

The testimonies of those who knew Ailey in his final years are especially raw. Two days after his death, the company was back on stage — ending, of course, with *Revelations*. *Ailey* is the film we needed to understand how it came to be, and remember a man who sacrificed “everything”, as he put it, in the name of dance.

In UK cinemas from January 4, including a Q&A with the director hosted by Bonnie Greer

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

[‘Ailey’ Review: Peeking Behind the Curtain of a Choreographer’s Creative Mind](#)

By: John Anderson

January 7, 2022 (Online 1/6/22)

TELEVISION REVIEW | JOHN ANDERSON

A Peek Behind the Curtain Of a Creative Mind

The problem with being Alvin Ailey was being Alvin Ailey. “Sometimes your name becomes bigger than yourself,” says the dancer-choreographer Carmen de Lavallade of her late friend and colleague. “Alvin Ailey: Do you really know who that is, or *what* that is?” Jamila Wignot’s moving and poetic documentary portrait, “Ailey,” provides answers, while making clear that its subject had the same questions.

Ailey, who grew up dirt poor in Texas, the son of a nomadic single mother, became not only one of the more significant choreographers of the 20th century but a man synonymous with Black dance in America. “Did they love him, or what he represented?” asks the dancer-choreographer Bill T. Jones, echoing several of the Ailey friends and company members who appear throughout, including Judith Jamison, George Faison and Masazumi Chaya. Mr. Jones speculates that his onetime collaborator suffered the “demon” that often torments those who rise from humble origins to great heights. “If I’ve got-

ten this far,” he says, rhetorically, “I must have pulled one over on somebody. And any day now, I may be found out.”

Mr. Jones is probably the most eloquent and insightful of an unfailingly cogent group of interviewees who populate Ms. Wignot’s film, which provides history, anecdotes and analysis about Ailey and as an “American Masters” presentation seems long overdue. Like most shows in the series, it is a tribute; unlike most, it is a gloriously expressionistic treatment of its subject. (Last summer’s program about bluesman Buddy Guy took a similarly adventurous tack; perhaps it’s a trend.) Ms. Wignot uses archival film in fluidly kinetic ways, deferring to Ailey’s own words when she can—“Ailey” contains a trove of audio interviews that she marries to footage that is often chosen not necessarily for its historical relevance but for its energy. The New York of the late ‘50s, when her subject founded the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, through the late ‘80s, when Ailey died of complications related to AIDS, is evoked in a



Dancer and choreographer Alvin Ailey (foreground) in a production of ‘Blues Suite’

torrent of images that pay their own kind of homage to the palette of movement with which Ailey created his landmark dances, as well as the times he lived through. It also reflects the turmoil Ailey suffered—mentally, medically and in

terms of his fame and place in Black culture.

The technology is available that can make sound and picture look brand new, even if it’s a half-century old—see the Beatles on Disney+. But Ms. Wignot has deliber-

ately maintained the antique quality of much of her materials, including scratchy interviews and melty images, which not only provides ambience but helps differentiate between eras. This is particularly useful during the sequences that book-end the Ailey portrait—and occasionally interrupt it—and involve the creation of a work commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Ailey company (which took place in 2018). Robert Battle, the artistic director of the troupe, invited choreographer Rennie Harris (of the Puremovement company) to create such a work, and at the beginning of “Ailey” Mr. Harris is introduced to the young Ailey performers—through whom the new work will develop and evolve throughout the film. “We’re gonna create whatever this is,”

Mr. Harris jokes to laughs from the dancers. “It’s gotta be good.” It is. And like “Ailey” itself, seems worthy of its subject.

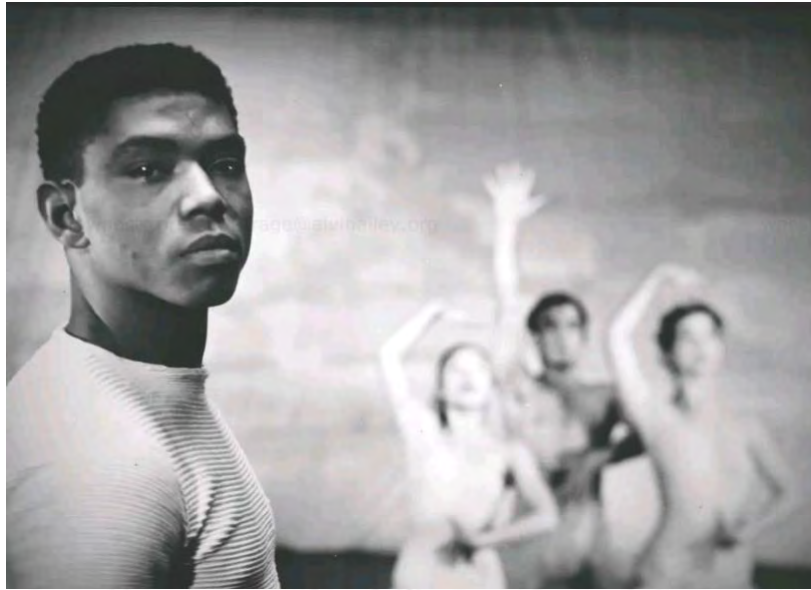
Ailey
Tuesday, 9 p.m., PBS

The Washington Post

Film looks at what made Mr. Ailey Mr. Ailey

By: Linda Matchan

July 25, 2021



Film looks at what made Mr. Ailey Mr. Ailey

BY LINDA MATCHAN

The documentary “Ailey,” opening nationwide in theaters Aug. 6, is a long-overdue portrait of the modern dance pioneer.

Alvin Ailey died in 1989 at age 58, but, significantly, much of the Insignia Films documentary was filmed in 2018 at a New York dance studio near a street named Alvin Ailey Place. As we watch a new generation of Ailey dancers taking direction from hip-hop choreographer Rennie Harris, it’s as though Ailey never really left; he and his company have always evolved to meet the times.

At the time, Harris had been commissioned “out of the blue” by Robert Battle, artistic director of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, to create a work about Ailey for the 60th anniversary of the company, founded in 1958. We see him focusing intently in a screening room, watching and re-watching archival footage of Ailey, as he worked to create what would become “Lazarus.”

“I just sit there and watch,” Harris says, “to find out what made Mr. Ailey Mr. Ailey.”

What did make Mr. Ailey Mr. Ailey? The director Jamila Wignot grapples with this question, too, in this compelling film about the legendary dancer, director and choreographer — the one who brought Black culture into the dance mainstream. The documentary premiered in January at the Sundance Film Festival.

Given Ailey’s stature and enduring impact, and given that he died more than three decades ago, it’s a wonder that the question is still being asked. The Ailey company has performed on six continents for millions of people. Ailey’s masterful 1960 ballet “Revelations,” which draws on the sorrows and jubilation of African American spirituals, gospel and blues from the “blood memories” of his Texas childhood, is considered a cultural treasure. It’s been said to be the most widely seen modern dance work in the world.

“They wouldn’t let us off the stage,” former Ailey dancer Hope Clarke recalls in the film, describing a performance in Europe. “It was about 80-some bows that we had to do. I’ve never seen people stand up and take their shoes off and hit the wall! No matter what we did, those people would not go home.”

But Ailey’s artistic legacy is more than the sum of the dances he created, searing though they are. It derived from his early years during the Depression, growing up Black in small-town Texas without a father, picking cotton with his mother when he was just 4 years old, sometimes going hungry.

“I mean, if you were Black, you were nothing,” Ailey says in a segment of a rarely heard audio interview with journalist A. Peter Bailey that was recorded over 20 hours shortly before the choreographer died. “I remember seeing my mother on her knees scrubbing these White folks’ rooms and homes.”

Listening to his recollections, paired with moody and evocative archival footage of the Deep South, it’s clear that Ailey was destined to dance. It’s as though

ABOVE: Modern dance pioneer Alvin Ailey is pictured in the 1950s with Misaye Kawasaki, Larry Maldonado and Lelia Goldoni of the Lester Horton Dance Group. The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has performed on six continents for millions of people, and his 1960 ballet “Revelations” is considered a cultural treasure.

BELOW: Ailey dancers perform in Kanji Segawa’s “Future” as part of the Ailey Spring Gala on June 24.

dance moves unfolded from his DNA. When he describes his rural childhood, it’s in terms of movement and the placement of bodies in space. He speaks of “people moving in the twilight,” “being glued to my mother’s hip, sloshing through the terrain, branches slashing against a child’s body . . . looking for a place to be.”

When Ailey was 12, his mother moved to Los Angeles to work in the aircraft industry and sent for him a few months later. As a teenager, he was drawn to dance and theater, although he never saw Black dancers or actors onstage — “nobody to model yourself after.” Until he was 15, that is, and Katherine Dunham’s company came to town. Ailey was gobsmacked.

“I couldn’t believe there were Black people on the legitimate stage,” he says. “I was just taken

into another realm.”

And he remained in this realm until he died, sacrificing everything to dance, embracing a mission that was revolutionary for his time. Ailey created a racially diverse company with all body types to celebrate, honor and reflect Black traditions and experiences. He very consciously created dance not for the elite, but for “the man in the street.”

“Choreography was his catharsis,” says Sarita Allen, a former Ailey dancer and one of more than a dozen dancers, directors and choreographers who shared stories about Ailey, including Judith Jamison, chosen by Ailey as his successor before he died; Battle, who took over in 2011; and guest choreographer Bill T. Jones.

Ailey’s work also was lonely and exhausting, occasionally leading him to dark and destruc-

tive places. He let few people in — literally. Even close friends never saw the inside of his apartment.

Although not a dancer herself, Wignot, the film’s director, is “a huge Ailey fan” who first saw the company perform when she was a college student in Boston in the 1990s. So when Stephen Ives and Amanda Pollak of Insignia Films approached her about directing a film about Ailey’s life, she jumped at the opportunity.

At first, Wignot says, making a film about Ailey was just an idea, with a lot of unknowns: How much of him could be in the film? What material would be available to her? Who would tell the story? Most critically, how could she tell the story through Ailey’s eyes?

“I wanted to know where this work emerged from, what experiences affected him,” she says. “I wanted to know what was feeding him, as an artist, and a person.”

Fortuitously, the Ailey company made Bailey’s tapes available, and Wignot used them as a narrative device, as a sort of gritty audio equivalent of grainy footage. She also accessed tantalizing black-and-white footage of early dances, including scenes of the muscular and magnetic Ailey at a young age, and she wove in archival material that imagined and evoked his life and thoughts.

Given the enduring and kinetic nature of Ailey’s work, the film called out for a contemporary element. “It needed to be a living, breathing entity,” Wignot says. “Ailey was sensitive and vulnerable but very alive to the world.”

In a “moment of serendipity,” she says, when they first approached the company, Battle told them they’d just commissioned the Harris work. “Ailey” intercuts footage of rehearsals for “Lazarus,” which addresses racial inequities Ailey faced throughout his life.

“I think the film really resonates today,” Battle says. “We see some of the same conditions today, in terms of the racial upheaval, the bigotry, the hate, the injustice that in a way was the starting point for him wanting to have a company in the first place.”

“The arts are the artifacts of human survival. And so this film offers us another point of view — that if [Ailey] could do it, then why can’t I? We can’t all be Alvin Ailey, but we can tell our story. We should tell our story, knowing we could liberate someone else.”

style@washpost.com



CHERYLYNN TSUSHIMA/ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

Re-Creating Alvin Ailey's Visionary Dance Ideas

By: Jazz Tangcay

August 4, 2021

08.04.2021

VARIETY • 77

Re-Creating Alvin Ailey's Visionary Dance Ideas

By Jazz Tangcay



Anyone who has studied theater and dance will know the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and its founder. Not only did Ailey form a dance movement, but his company also became a pioneering force for Black artists as they traveled the world, introducing political themes and helping integrate the world of dance.

Street dancer-turned-choreographer Rennie Harris had heard the name but didn't become interested in the Ailey movement until late in the 2000s. "I was a hardcore dancer. At that point, I wasn't feeling modern dance," Harris explains.

Now the two are linked through the doc "Ailey," which will be released nationwide Aug. 6. The film highlights the legendary choreographer's life and visionary work, with Harris interpreting his dances.

It was when Harris finally saw the trailblazing "Revelations," the 1960s work that put Ailey on the map, that he became inspired. Later, he was hired by the Alvin Ailey company to re-create the choreographer's works. In the doc, we see Harris workshopping "Lazarus," a production about racial injustice in Jim Crow-era Texas. Director Jamila Wignot mixes archival Ailey footage and interviews as Harris puts his production together in the studio.

By watching the archival clips alongside Harris' re-creation,



Alvin Ailey was still in his 20s when his signature work, "Revelations," debuted in New York City.

"Alvin Ailey shifts from God of African American culture and dance to having this human element," Harris says.

The documentary also brings to light the revolutionary idea at the time of "Black bodies doing

ballet," Harris says. "Alvin had a lot to say politically with dance. They wanted him to get out and protest, but I don't think people got that the company itself — the Alvin Ailey dance company — was a protest." 7

The New York Times

Special Sunday Insert: Perpetual Motion

By: Zadie Smith

April 14, 2019

PERPETUAL MOTION

The photographs in this section are from The New York Times archives, which consist of some six million prints — some dating back more than 100 years. The Past Tense storytelling team chose the images from thousands of dance photos and commissioned commentary from the ballerina Misty Copeland (Pages 8-13, 44-49) and an essay from the writer Zadie Smith (Pages 28-29). Additional pictures from The Times's archives are published every day on Instagram @nytarchives.



RICHARD CORMAN/WEISS KATZ GALLERY

DON REE | AMY KARINE PLANTADIT AND IIRI SANDS | ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER, 1996.

UPLIFT!

By ZADIE SMITH

When I was about 12, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater came to town and my mother took me to see them. It was a trip for just us two, and I was a little reluctant, suspecting some species of racial uplift, which I felt I could receive far more easily by staying in my room, listening to Monie Love and watching Cameo's "Word Up" video on repeat. I was suspicious of racial uplift in general. The way it always seemed to point in the same direction, toward the supposed "higher" arts: the theater but not the television, opera singers but not beatboxers, ballet dancers but not body-poppers. No Jamaican mother ever ran into a kid's bedroom, waving a cassette, crying: "Have you heard 'Push It'?" It's by some brilliant young ladies from New York!" Yet I couldn't imagine anything on the legitimate stage meaning as much to me as Salt-N-Pepa's bump and grind.

Off we went — and it was a ravishment. Nothing prepares you for the totality of Alvin Ailey: the aural, visual, physical, spiritual beauty. Up to that point, most high-culture excursions (usually school trips) had felt like sly training for a lifetime of partly satisfying adult aesthetic experiences: nice singing but absurd story, or good acting but incomprehensi-

ble 400-year-old text, and so on. To be permitted to hear the thickly stacked, honeyed gospel of "Wade in the Water," while simultaneously watching those idealized, muscular arms — in every shade of brown — slowly rise and assume the shape of so many ancient amphoras! Heaven. And then below the regality and poise of the upper body, beneath the waist, there continued the bastardized bump and grind from MTV, coming full circle to meet its call-and-response West African roots. Everywhere you looked: sensory pleasure. In place of the saccharine costume confections of "The Nutcracker," here were down-home, flowing, church-white gowns, stunning against so much shining dark skin, and redolent of the American South, a dream place I'd visited only in books and song. It dawned on me that I was watching neither high nor low culture but rather a wholly unified thing.

Ailey's all-encompassing vocabulary included the athletes from the running tracks and the fly-girls from the videos, the swaying of church ministers and the hip-switching of Caribbean dance hall and carnival. A diaspora of movement, in short. All fingertips stretched to the sky, all leaps seemed weightless, the whole logic tended upward. "Didn't my Lord deliver

Daniel well?" asked the gospel choir, and then pushed the question further from the biblical to the political: "Then why not every man?" Deliverance. From shackles, from oppression, from stereotype and misidentification, from prejudice, from any form of restraint, even that proposed by gravity. Toward freedom. (I note that in the photo the minister is the only one encumbered with shoes.)

To me, all dance is a discourse on freedom, but in black dance, for obvious reasons, this discourse has been as much literal as figurative. Which fact makes it impossible not to see this photograph as history as much as choreography, although it is an image in which the "black body" is not solely a site of pain, suffering and exploitation — as it is often depicted today — but also the locus of an extraordinary joy. At the shimmering point at which archetypes ("the black body") become individuals and then icons, I spy, in this image of uplift, Bishop Richard Allen, Marsha Hunt and Joseph Cinque leaping into history, or the Rev. Al Green, Lauryn Hill and Bill T. Jones ascending toward the sublime. And each spring, now that I live in New York, I don't have to go very far at all to get another shot of Ailey's soaring delights.

AFTERWORD

Six months ago, the newly formed Past Tense team began sifting through the treasure chest that is the New York Times archives, where some six million photographs are filed away. Photographs of dance quickly emerged as one of the most enduring themes, with photos that date back more than 100 years. Most of those photos are of ordinary people, and that's what we've highlighted here: from slow dances to the Twist, from the mambo to the mosh pit. Choreographers and professional dancers, like our guest editor, Misty Copeland, are scattered throughout, in part because it's in them that we find not just the highest elevation of the form, but a metaphor for possibility that extends far beyond the realm of dance. In her essay here, the novelist Zadie Smith remembers a performance by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater from her childhood as nothing less than "a ravishment." Oprah Winfrey, talking to The Times about Ailey's company in 1996, said much the same: "It makes us feel better about ourselves, that you can live better, that you can fly." This section is devoted to the world of dancers, both off and onstage, who help keep alive that dream of flight.

VERONICA CHAMBERS, editor, *Past Tense*

THE MAGIC OF *REVELATIONS*

BY JEN PETERS

Even today, Ailey's masterpiece remains a powerful ode to the resilience of the human spirit.



AAADT in the opening section: "I Been 'Buked"

In 1960, America was in the midst of a social transformation. The Supreme Court had ruled "separate but equal" unconstitutional six years prior, but the country's response was slow and turbulent as desegregation incited violent responses. Surrounded by powerful civil rights momentum, a 29-year-old Alvin Ailey created an ode to the resilience of the human spirit: *Revelations*. "Alvin was making a statement about African-American cultural experience, saying, 'Hey, this is who we are, we live here, we were born here,'" says Judith Jamison, artistic director emerita of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. "It was a brave action. Civil rights were roaring, and our protest was our performance."

Even today, *Revelations* presents a compelling plea for society through its renderings of the highs and lows of our human condition.

"When I look at recent events in this country and hear rhetoric that is more than a throwback to the Jim Crow era," says current AAADT artistic director Robert Battle, "I know that now, more than ever, *Revelations* is urgently needed."

The piece has made a profound impact. AAADT dancers perform *Revelations* hundreds, even thousands, of times in the course of their careers. Their bodies carry not only the steps, but the weight and historical relevance of the piece. "I haven't danced it in years, but I remember every step I ever learned," says Jamison, whose performances as the umbrella woman helped propel her to stardom. "You feel whole by the time the curtain comes down. No matter how many times you perform or see it, it lifts you." ►

Robert Battle and Masazumi Chaya watching from the wings



THE BIRTH OF A MASTERWORK

While creating *Revelations*—one of his earliest works—Ailey was searching for personal, artistic and cultural identity. He investigated what he described as his ancestral “blood memories,” and his personal history growing up an only child in rural segregated Texas, attending Baptist churches with his single mother, being overwhelmed by spiritual gospel music. Divided into three sections, his narrative journeys through a mournful “Pilgrim of Sorrow”; the baptismal second section, “Take Me to the Water”; and “Move Members, Move,” depicting an uplifting spiritual community.

“*Revelations* began with the music. As early as I can remember I was enthralled by

the music played and sung in small black churches,” Ailey described in his memoir *Revelations: The Autobiography of Alvin Ailey*. He wrote that he was also stirred by the sculptures of Henry Moore, the writings of Langston Hughes, and the technical elements of Martha Graham and his mentor Lester Horton: “Moore’s work inspired the costumes made of jersey in the first part. When the body moves, the jersey takes on extraordinary tensions.”

The piece premiered in New York City at the 92nd Street Y on Sunday, January 31, 1960, with nine dancers including Ailey, and live musicians. “The theater was packed,” recalls Sylvia Waters, a former Ailey II director, and current director of the Ailey Legacy Residency. “I was in the balcony, and when the curtain came down there was a moment of silence and then an eruption of clapping, stamping...it was huge!” The original version was a full hour, which Ailey said he then “snipped, cut, pushed and pulled down to a half hour.”

THE SNAG TO SUCCESS

Reaching the pinnacle of his choreographic career early on, Ailey struggled at times with his personal relationship to *Revelations*. “He sometimes referred to *Revelations* as ‘the albatross around his neck,’” says Waters. “He was frustrated, always being put in that box, because he created 79 ballets and many thought this was the only piece he ever created!”

PASSING IT ON

As *Revelations* approaches 60 years of nearly uninterrupted performances, Ailey’s hopeful message continues to spread. “Alvin Ailey was able to create a work about faith in God, yet it transcends religion,” says Battle. “*Revelations* has a way of breaking through spiritual and language barriers.”

Battle has witnessed the passing of the torch firsthand since becoming director in 2011. “I see new dancers in their first performance, or longtime dancers moving into iconic roles—it connects them to the past, to Alvin Ailey himself. It is a powerful, moving experience,” says Battle, who sometimes marks the movement in the wings to interplay with the dancers. “I never danced *Revelations* myself, so [associate artistic director Masazumi] Chaya has threatened to put me into ‘yellow section’ at some point...I humbly decline!” ■

Jen Peters is a frequent contributor to Dance Magazine.

MOST MEMORABLE AUDIENCE REACTIONS

“When we used to perform with live music, I remember audience members bringing tambourines and playing along. They were ready like it was church!” —JUDITH JAMISON

“In South Africa for the first time, we finished *Revelations* and the audience was clapping, then they started pounding their feet in unison, which we experience in Europe often. But then they started chanting something in unison, and to this day we still don’t know what it was! It was a really spiritual experience.” —MATTHEW RUSHING

“Once, in Germany, we had already gone offstage and into our dressing rooms. I was about to take my eyelashes off, but the audience kept going, so Mr. Ailey had us do an encore, and all the bows, several times. They closed the curtain, they opened it again—it went on for 15, maybe 20 minutes. We finally put our heads in our hands, like ‘We are tired.’ They had to lower the metal fire curtain!”

—JUDITH JAMISON

The “yellow section”



REVELATIONS AS TEACHER

Over the years, the piece has become a powerful teaching tool. Ailey’s Arts in Education & Community Programs created a children’s school residency, *Revelations: An Interdisciplinary Approach*. Aimed at grades 6–8, the program uses Ailey’s life and *Revelations* to tie dance to language arts, social studies and even math through phrasing and counting. It also teaches movement from “I Been ‘Buked,” “Rocka My Soul” and sometimes “Wade in the Water.”

“We examine the decade of 1960 to 1970, look at American history, world history, ask students to interview family members about their personal history,” explains Nasha Thomas, who runs the program. “They write and share stories. They like seeing how much they may have in common with Mr. Ailey.” —JP



Linda Celeste Sims and Glenn Allen Sims in "Fix Me, Jesus"

THE PRE-REVELATIONS RITUAL

"Before the curtain rises, everyone in 'I Been 'Buked' takes hands. We come together, heads bowed, and focus. It really is beautiful. Right when the curtain goes up we release hands and heads go heavenward."

—MATTHEW RUSHING

Jacqueline Green as the umbrella woman



WHEN JUDITH JAMISON GOT "DEMOTED"

"The first two and a half years my favorite section was 'Fix Me, Jesus,' with Jimmy Truitte. Then Consuelo Atlas came along and was the first person to go past the T and into an arch, but I couldn't do that, so I got 'demoted' to carrying a prop...I was so mad! But I came out with that umbrella and a smile on my face. I felt lifted as I was running. Even though I was mad two seconds before, it was divine! I forgot about everything else." —JUDITH JAMISON

DANCERS' FAVORITE SECTIONS

YANNICK LEBRUN: "I Wanna Be Ready"

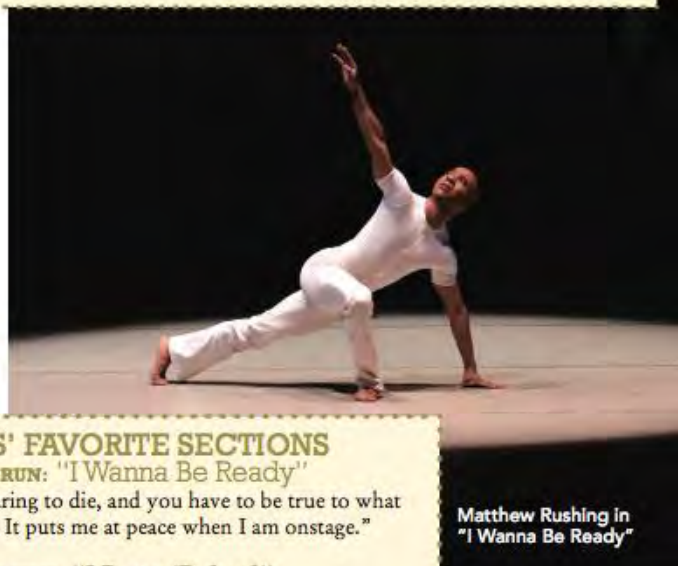
"You are preparing to die, and you have to be true to what the emotion is. It puts me at peace when I am onstage."

GLENN ALLEN SIMS: "I Been 'Buked"

"Feet planted in semi second position, golden light shining down on you; it is totally overwhelming. I get goosebumps just thinking about the vulnerability."

JACQUELINE GREEN: Umbrella Woman

"When she comes out, it is the first glimpse of joy. You have to embody it, see it in your run."



Matthew Rushing in "I Wanna Be Ready"