



Alvin Ailey dancers help expose Chicago students to the arts

By: Leah Hope

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The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater helped expose Chicago students to the arts at the Auditorium in the Loop. CHICAGO (WLS) -- With philanthropic giving dwindling and federal grants cut, Chicago schools and those across the country are struggling to find the arts. On Thursday, hundreds of Chicago students saw a performance in-person and got a glimpse of possible careers in the arts, as the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater returned to the city. The mini performance at the Auditorium was much more interactive than a traditional performance. Nearly 1,500 Chicago students were asked to help cue lights and sets, and students rehearsed a few moves.

"We really don't consider having our mini performances for our schoolchildren extra. It's actually one of the most important aspects of what we do," said Alicia Graf Mack, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater artistic director.

Some dancers on stage are from the area, including Isaiah Day from Chicago in his third season. "Dancers, especially Ailey dancers, are athletes, pretty much on the level of Olympians. So I'm glad to show them that, and you can have power and strength and be vulnerable and show all those sides of you, too," Day said.

Sixty students from Doolittle Academy were able to attend thanks to the nonprofit arts organization the African American Museum of the Performing Arts. "Them jumping so high they look like they were going jump off the roof," fifth-grader Aiden Rose said. "I like the moves they did," fourth-grader Damaria Woods said. "It was crazy; it was absolutely crazy. They were doing a bunch of crazy stuff; it was amazing," fourth-grader King Reese said.

Their principal said she was inspired to teach by being exposed to the arts as a student. "I want to open those doors for all of my students. And so whatever they say they want to do, I reach high and search down low to give them anything they want to do and be," Doolittle Academy Principal Iysha Jones said.

Alvin Ailey performs this weekend only, and it's not sold out yet. For students who missed the mini performance, there are student rush tickets. Show your student ID for a same-day show for \$25.

Watch here: <https://abc7chicago.com/post/alvin-ailey-american-dance-theater-helps-expose-chicago-students-arts-auditorium-loop/18953978/>

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