



Alicia Graf Mack Talks Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre and Portrait of Ailey Documentary

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Alvin Ailey's name is synonymous with dance. A documentary, *Portrait of Ailey*, has been produced and provides a much larger context for Ailey's life. I was honored to moderate a panel discussion at the Center for Civil and Human Rights at a screening of the documentary. Artistic Director Alicia Graf Mack joined me for a discussion about dance, Alvin Ailey, and the legacy she has been entrusted with.

Mack shared how her love of dance came about, speaking about a videotape of Judith Jameson performing "Cry," which let her know that she could be a dancer. With her parents' support, she began to learn "the language of dance." She remembers seeing Alvin Ailey on stage and speaks about how all humans dance. She eventually joined the Alvin Ailey Dance Company under the tutelage of Judith Jameson.

I asked her about the documentary, where I learned that Alvin Ailey attended high school with Carmen de Lavallade and followed her to dance class. He also met and danced with Maya Angelou while attending college in Northern California. Mack speaks about iron sharpening iron.

Mack speaks about the expansive performing companies that are under the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre. There are schools and companies for amateurs and professionals. They have a travel company and pop-up performances. It is all rooted in the genius of Ailey, the culture and spirit of the music and movement.

I asked Mack about *Revelations*, which now ends every performance in Atlanta. She speaks about watching the performances every night just as the leaders did before. She speaks about the cultural touchstone in our community where this dance is known and revered. Mack emphasizes that she is now a responsible steward who will continue to amplify and propel the company into the future.

Atlanta performances are scheduled at the Fox Theatre from February 11th - 15th.