



Alvin Ailey Offers D.C. Audiences Inspiration Under a New Roof, Leadership, Presenter

Company Continues Founder's Mission: 'Hold Up a Mirror to the Audience'

By Micha Green

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Leaping in with bold changes — including performing under a new roof, leadership and presenter — [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre](#) returns to Washington, D.C. with innovations that honor the legacy of the company's founder and namesake, while bringing audiences messages of hope and a little D.C. flair.

"This monumental season draws deeply on Alvin Ailey's legacy rooted in celebrating the resilience of the human spirit, while extending its truth and bold virtuosity to reflect this moment in time and our hopes for the future," said Alicia Graf Mack, a District native and Alvin Ailey's newly minted artistic director. "It is also personally meaningful for me to launch

this special tour in Washington, D.C., where I experienced the magic of Ailey when I was an aspiring dancer filled with so many dreams that have now come to fruition."

As Graf Mack has her full-circle moment, she leads a company dancing through even more changes. After performing for years at The Kennedy Center, the company of 32 dancers will wow audiences at the Warner Theatre Jan. 30 through Feb. 8, and with Live Nation as the new presenters — a welcome change for [company member Samantha Figgins](#).

"As a D.C. native, I'm excited to be in a more local theatre with such a rich history. And I think it's so amazing for the D.C. audience to really feel at home," Figgins, one of six dancers in the company from the region, told The Informer. "[Live Nation] is the world's leading live entertainment company. So it's just a wonderful opportunity to work with a partner that has a huge global reach."

However, for Figgins, [in her 11th season with the company](#), the new venue and presenter is not the only exciting change.

Figgins is particularly looking forward to this year's homecoming with Ailey, as she served as an associate choreographer on one of six pieces premiering during this tour: Jawole Willa Jo Zollar's "The Holy Blues."

Zollar, Figgins and Chalvar Monteiro, who also served as an associate choreographer, were motivated by "[Edges of Ailey](#)," an exhibit featured at [The Whitney Museum of American Art](#) in New York from September 2024 to February 2025.



"Finding his journal entries about his process — journaling about his upbringing and things — [we took] that as inspiration to build this work and build something rooted in our history," Figgins said, "but also something totally fresh for the generation, the times, the society, and culture that we live in today."

Plus, District audiences will recognize Figgins' influence on the piece.



“I had to throw a little D.C. flavor into ‘The Holy Blues,’ so a lot of the movement is pulled from D.C. go-go and beat your feet — that whole movement,” Figgins said. “So you’ll be seeing some hometown movement vocabulary on stage.”

The company is also excited to bring three other world premieres in addition to “The Holy Blues”: “Embrace,” by Fredrick Earl Mosley, “Difference Between,” by Matthew Neenan, and “Song of the Anchorite,” by Jamar Roberts.

“The new work,” Figgins said, “is what’s really exciting this year.”

Honoring Legacy, ‘Blood Memories’

As Alvin Ailey continues to evolve, the company is also celebrating the classics, premiering Medhi Walerski’s “Blink of an Eye,” a new production of [Ailey Artistic Director Emerita Judith Jamison](#)’s “A Case of You,” and “An Ailey Legacy,” highlighting several pieces from the company’s repertoire, including “Night Creature,” “A Song for You” and “Cry.”

The company is also coming to D.C. with classic pieces in tow, including the beloved “Revelations.”

“I came up with a piece. An evening-long saga to the Black experience. I would call it ‘Revelations,’” Ailey once said, according to a 2022 episode of PBS’ “American Masters.” “My blood memories. The memories of my parents, uncles and aunts. Blues and gospel songs that I knew from Texas.”

The diverse Ailey artists bring their personal “blood memories” to the choreography, Figgins explained, all the while staying true to the company founder’s mission.

“His goal was for the company was to really hold up a mirror to the audience and be a reflection of what we see in our everyday lives and put that on the stage,” said Figgins, a graduate of Duke Ellington School of the Arts, where the company will conduct a workshop during their time in D.C. “You will see yourself on stage, and you’ll experience. You’ll see the grief, you’ll see your struggles, but there’s also so much joy and love and expansion that can be found, and a release.”

For Figgins, this year’s performance offers the audience a challenge.

“I think it’s a call to action as well as for whatever motivation you may need in your own life,” the dancer told The Informer, emphasizing that she hopes people are inspired to move their bodies as a source of healing. “It’s the movement that is necessary in our lives, and we’re not saying you have to pick up your leg, but I think that movement helps so much with processing, and so, I think seeing the dancers allows you to bring some of that into your life.”