

Celebrating 50 years of Alvin Ailey's Ailey School

By: Kemberly Richardson

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Watch Part 1 and 2 here: <https://abc7ny.com/education/celebrating-50-years-of-the-ailey-school/5733758/> (6 minutes)

Dancers with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater perform their season opener at City Center in New York City on Wednesday night.

"It's such a privilege to continue to build a pathway that Mr. Ailey started for us so many years ago," student Hannah Richardson said.

The notion is heavy on their minds during rehearsal. In March of 1958, Alvin Ailey and a small group of dancers first performed at the 92nd street "Y" on the Upper West Side. Nine years later, he started the Ailey School. Now, 50 years later, the school continues celebrating Ailey's vision.

"He could see almost the future in dance, and what he did, he did with such heart and honesty and love that it still is alive today," co-director Tracy Inman said.

And it shapes these dancers are both personally and professionally. Young people from all over the world go there to learn and perfect their craft. Guided by Mr. Ailey's mission that dance is for everybody, the young people pour every ounce of their souls and bodies into their craft. The Ailey School has trained 75% of the current members of the first company. Isaiah Harvey is a student from Queens.

"I remember the first time I saw them," he said. "They reminded me of superheroes, and I remember seeing Clifton Brown doing a solo and I immediately fell in love."

It's Ronni Favors' love of dance that drew her to the company in 1974. As rehearsal director, she keeps in mind an idea that was at Ailey's core.

"You cannot dance about dance, you have to dance about life," she said. "The Ailey company has always been about the human being on stage and off. It's always about having a dialogue."

As for the next century and beyond, the company's goal is to stay relevant in a landscape that's quickly changing.

"I hope people will still recognize and appreciate all that we are, all that we have been, and all that we can be as we move forward," Inman said.

For more information about the school, please visit TheAileySchool.edu. The company will be at City Center through January 5. For tickets go to AlvinAiley.org