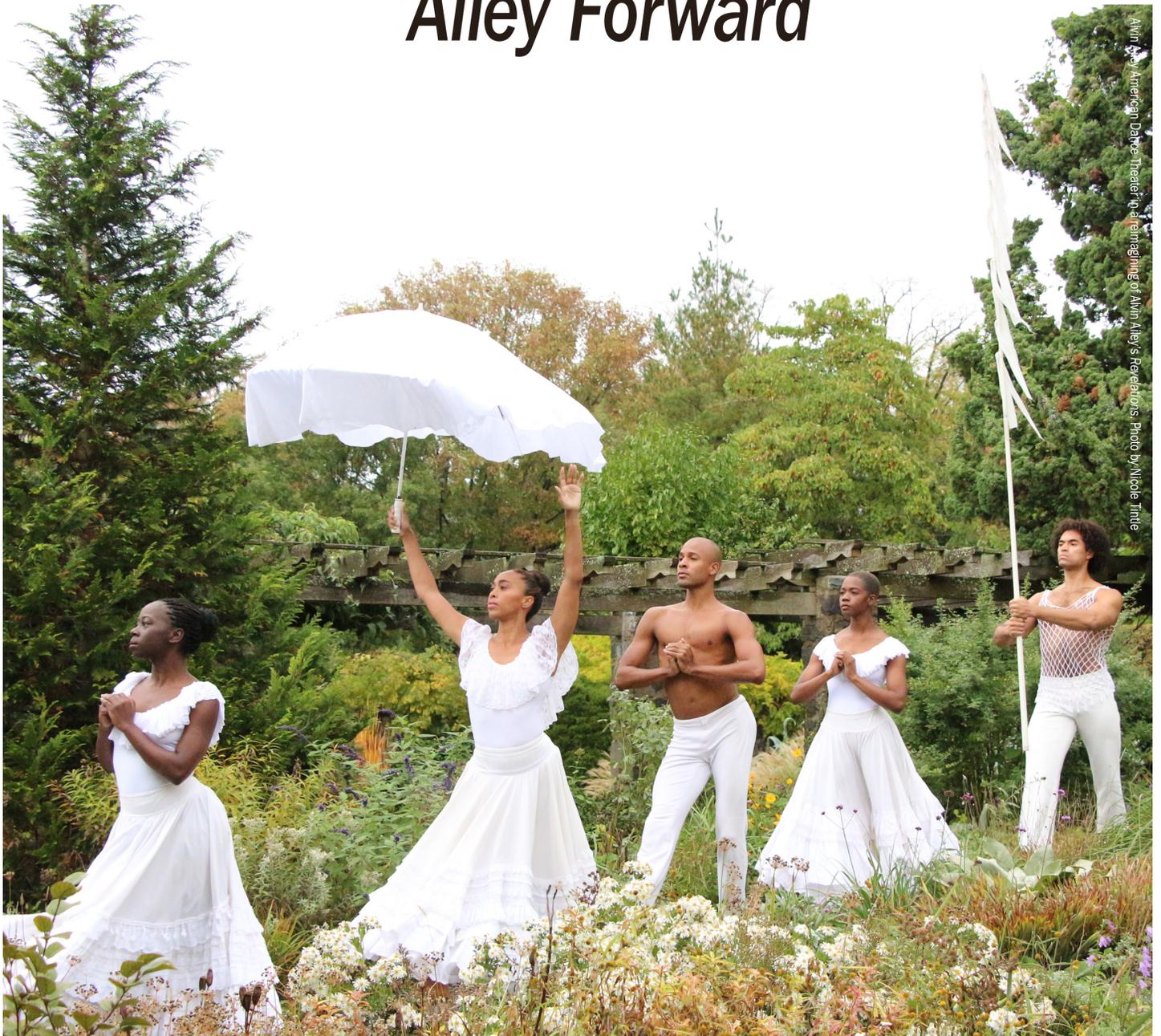


**ALVIN AILEY** AMERICAN  
DANCE  
THEATER

**PRESS KIT**

# *Ailey Forward*



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in a reimagining of Alvin Ailey's Revelations. Photo by Nicole Tittle

# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in Alvin Ailey's Revelations. Photo by Paul Kolnik

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. Ms. Jamison, in turn, personally selected Robert Battle to succeed her in 2011. In announcing his appointment, she stated, "Combining an intimate knowledge of the Ailey company with an independent perspective, Robert Battle is without question the creative force of the future." 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](http://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

"[Robert] Battle who carries the mantle of his stewardship with great care, not only to preserve Ailey's spirit, but also to move the company forward and expand its repertory with new works, commissions from prominent, often groundbreaking choreographers..."

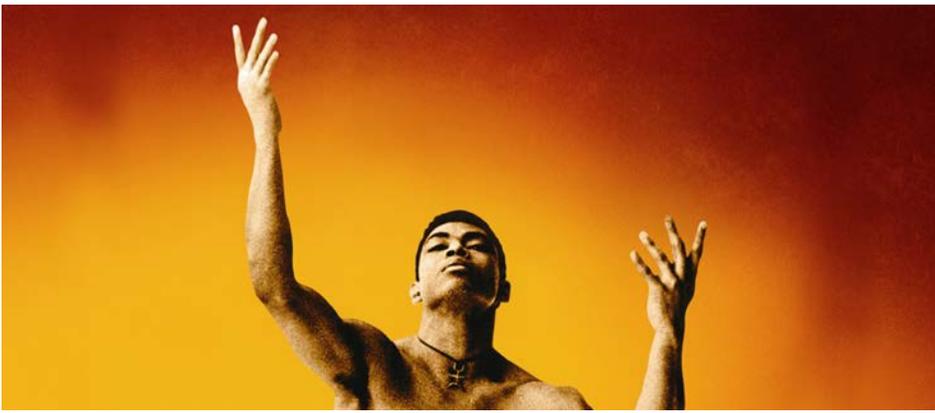
— THE BOSTON GLOBE

"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.



## 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. Because of COVID-19, Ailey II has been placed on hiatus until July 2021. We look forward to Ailey II's return during the 2021-22 season.



## THE AILEY SCHOOL

Each year, more than 3,500 students of all ages from NYC, across the country and around the globe benefit from world-class training in a full range of techniques at The Ailey School, directed by Tracy Inman and Melanie Person.



## 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.



## AILEY EXTENSION

Ailey offers "real classes for real people" at all levels in a welcoming, non-competitive environment. Up to 100 dynamic classes are offered each week, taught by expert teachers in West African, Salsa, Hip-Hop, Ballet, Horton (the modern dance technique featured in Mr. Ailey's classic, *Revelations*) and more.



## 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.



## 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'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.

# ALL ABOUT ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater grew from a now-fabled performance in March 1958 at the 92nd Street Y in New York City. Led by Alvin Ailey and a group of young African-American modern dancers, that performance changed forever the perception of American dance. The Ailey company has gone on to perform for an estimated 25 million people at theaters in 48 states and 71 countries on six continents – and has reached millions more online and through television broadcasts.

In 2008, a U.S. Congressional resolution designated the Company as “a vital American cultural ambassador to the world” that celebrates the uniqueness of the African-American cultural experience and the preservation and enrichment of the American modern dance heritage.

When Mr. Ailey began creating dances, he drew upon his “blood memories” of Texas, the blues, spirituals, and gospel as inspiration, which resulted in the creation of his most popular and critically acclaimed work, *Revelations*, now celebrating 60 years.

Although he created 79 ballets over his lifetime, Mr. Ailey maintained that his company was not exclusively a repository for his own work. Today, the Company continues Mr. Ailey’s mission by presenting important works of the past and commissioning new ones. In all, more than 235 works by over 90 choreographers have been part of the Ailey company’s repertory.

Before his untimely death in 1989, Alvin Ailey named Judith Jamison as his successor, and over the next 21 years, she brought the Company to unprecedented success. Ms. Jamison, in turn, personally selected Robert Battle to succeed her in 2011. In announcing his appointment as Artistic Director, she stated, “Combining an intimate knowledge of the Ailey company with an independent perspective, Robert Battle is without question the creative force of the future.”

*Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater gratefully acknowledges The Joan & Sandy Weill Global Ambassador Fund, which provides vital support for Ailey’s national and international tours.*



Alvin Ailey, James Truitte, Don Martin, Myrna White, Ella Thompson and Minnie Marshall in *Revelations*, circa 1961. Photo by Jack Mitchell. © Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation Inc. and Smithsonian Institution

# 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*.

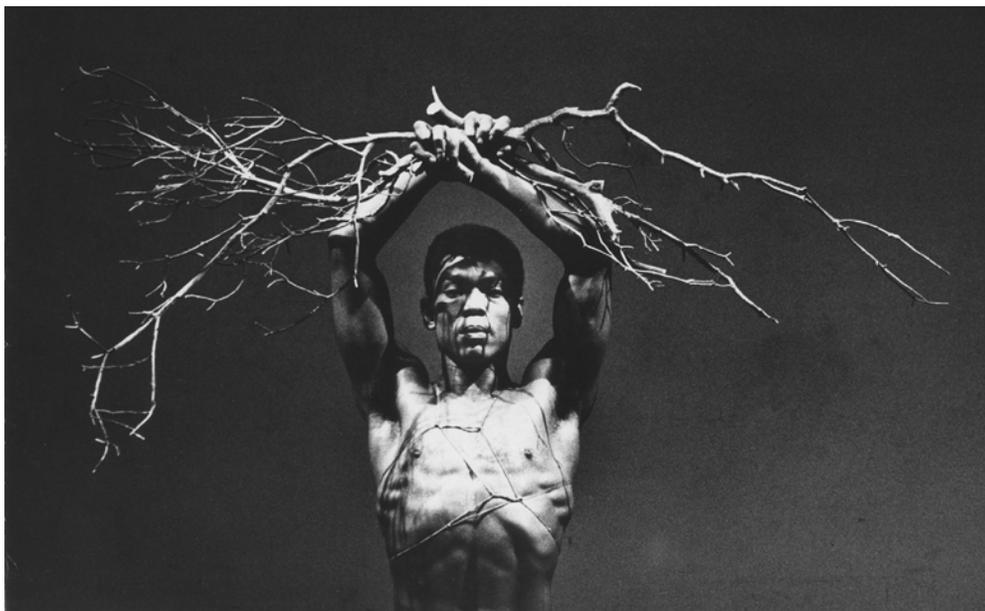
In 1958, he led a group of young black modern dancers in a performance in New York City that changed forever the perception of American dance. Since then, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater – a company dedicated to enriching the American modern dance heritage and preserving the uniqueness of the African-American 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.

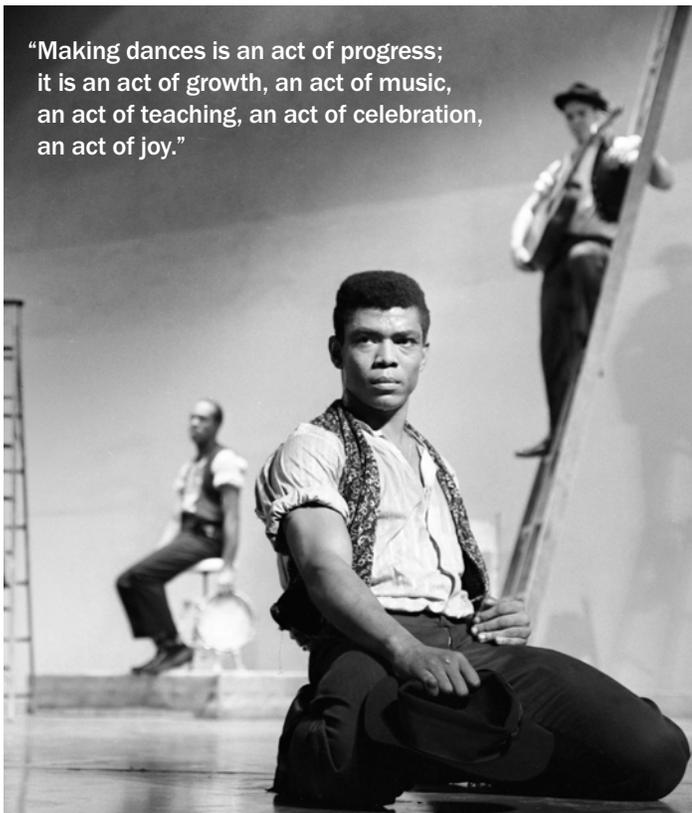
Throughout his lifetime, Alvin Ailey received numerous honors and awards, including several honorary doctoral degrees, a 1976 NAACP Spingarn Award, and a 1982 United Nations Peace Medal. From the dance world, he received the 1975 Dance Magazine Award, the 1979 Capezio Award and modern dance's most prestigious 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."

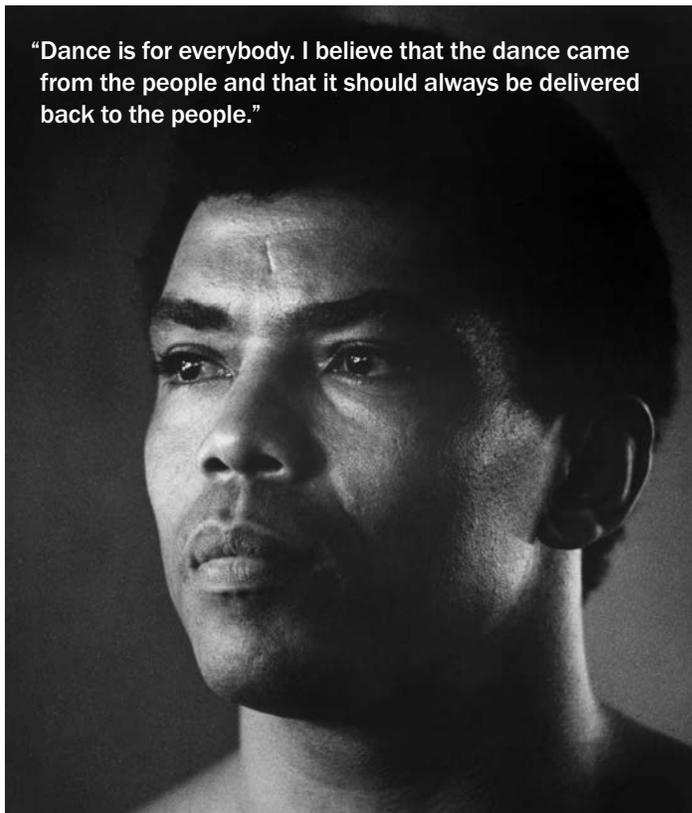


# ALVIN AILEY IN HIS OWN WORDS

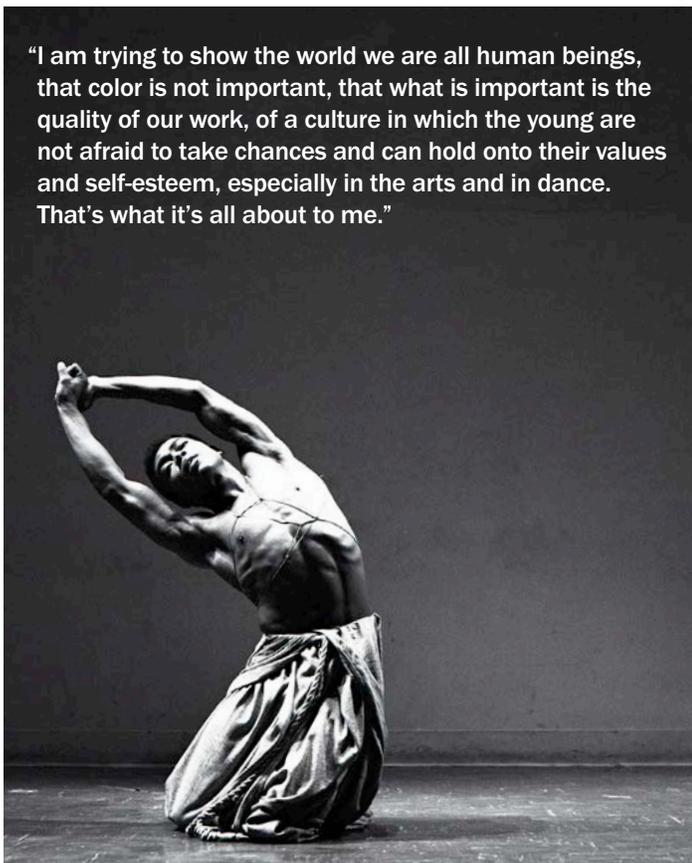
“Making dances is an act of progress; it is an act of growth, an act of music, an act of teaching, an act of celebration, an act of joy.”



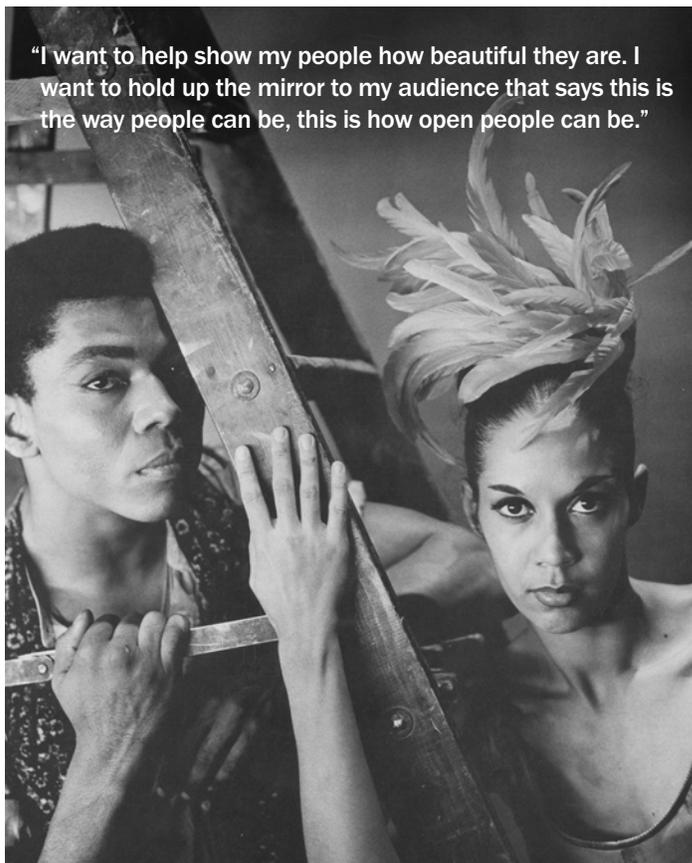
“Dance is for everybody. I believe that the dance came from the people and that it should always be delivered back to the people.”



“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



## ROBERT BATTLE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Robert Battle became artistic director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in July 2011 after being personally selected by Judith Jamison, making him only the third person to head the Company since it was founded in 1958. Mr. Battle has a long-standing association with the Ailey organization.

A frequent choreographer and artist in residence at Ailey since 1999, he has set many of his works on Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and Ailey II, and at The Ailey School. The Company's repertory includes his ballets *wakening*, *Ella*, *The Hunt*, *In/Side*, *Juba*, *Mass*, *No Longer Silent*, *Strange Humors*, *Takademe* and *Unfold*. In addition to expanding the Ailey repertory with works by artists as diverse as Kyle Abraham, Mauro Bigonzetti, Ronald K. Brown, Rennie Harris, and Paul Taylor, Mr. Battle has also instituted the New Directions Choreography Lab to help develop the next generation of choreographers.

Mr. Battle's journey to the top of the modern dance world began in the Liberty City neighborhood of Miami, Florida. He showed artistic talent early and studied dance at a high school arts magnet program before moving on to Miami's New World School of the Arts, under the direction of Daniel Lewis and Gerri Houlihan, and finally to the dance program at The Juilliard School, under the direction of Benjamin Harkarvy, where he met his mentor, Carolyn Adams. He danced with The Parsons Dance Company from 1994 to 2001, and also set his choreography on that company starting in 1998. Mr. Battle then founded his own Battleworks Dance Company, which made its debut in 2002 in Düsseldorf, Germany, as the U.S. representative to the World Dance Alliance's Global Assembly. Battleworks subsequently performed extensively at venues including The Joyce Theater, Dance Theater Workshop, American Dance Festival, and Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival.

Mr. Battle was honored as one of the "Masters of African-American Choreography" by the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in 2005, and he received the prestigious Statue Award from the Princess Grace Foundation-USA in 2007. He has honorary doctorates from The University of the Arts and Marymount Manhattan College. Mr. Battle was named a 2015 Visiting Fellow for The Art of Change, an initiative by the Ford Foundation. He is a sought-after keynote speaker and has addressed a number of high-profile organizations, including the United Nations Leaders Programme and the UNICEF Senior Leadership Development Programme.



## MATTHEW RUSHING ASSOCIATE 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 in June 2010 and succeeded Masazumi Chaya as Associate Artistic Director in January 2020.

# 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.



## BENNETT RINK EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Bennett Rink became Executive Director of Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation in 2013. Mr. Rink first joined Ailey as Manager of Special Events in 1994, became Development Director in 1998, and then worked as Senior Director of Development and External Affairs from 2007 to 2012. In his tenure overseeing Ailey’s development, Mr. Rink led a \$75 million capital campaign supporting Ailey’s first permanent home, The Joan Weill Center for Dance which opened in 2005, and established an endowment to support major program areas. When the Company celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2008, Mr. Rink supervised an 18-month celebration, including events, promotions, collaborations, and special performances, bringing public awareness of the Ailey organization to new heights. Mr. Rink also oversaw “The Next Step Campaign,” which grew the organization’s endowment to \$50 million. As Executive Director, Mr. Rink launched a five-year strategic plan in 2014 to realize Robert Battle’s creative vision, expand Ailey’s educational offerings, and enhance technology to extend the reach of the organization. Central to the plan has been the expansion of The Joan Weill Center for Dance, which attracts more than 200,000 visitors each year. This fall, Ailey unveiled the Center’s Elaine Wynn and Family Education

Wing, providing much-needed additional studios and classroom space to meet the growing demand for Ailey’s programs. The building now comprises 87,000 square feet and is the largest destination for dance in New York City. Mr. Rink also conceived The Campaign for Ailey’s Future, a \$50 million initiative to support the Center’s expansion and the ongoing implementation of other long-range strategic priorities. During Mr. Rink’s tenure, the Company deepened its presence in New York City by establishing a spring season at Lincoln Center 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, the Company has broadened its commitment to creating film and digital content, including its first-ever theatrical movie release as part of Lincoln Center at the Movies: Great American Dance. Mr. Rink is a graduate of Syracuse University and holds a B.F.A. in theater.



## 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 programme. 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.

# WHO'S WHO IN THE COMPANY



## JEROBOAM BOZEMAN

(Brooklyn, NY) began his dance training under Ruth Sistaire at the Ronald Edmonds Learning Center. He later joined Creative Outlet, and was granted full scholarships at the Joffrey Ballet School and Dance Theatre of Harlem. Mr. Bozeman is a gold-medal recipient of the NAACP

ACT-SO Competition in Dance. He performed in Elton John and Tim Rice's Broadway musical *Aida* (international tour in China) and was a part of Philadanco, Donald Byrd's Spectrum Dance Theater, and Ailey II. During the fall of 2016 Mr. Bozeman performed as a guest artist with The Royal Ballet, and *Dance Magazine* nominated him as one of "25 to Watch" in 2018. Mr. Bozeman was recently featured in Bud Light's NFL 100 commercial as the Bud Knight. He has been featured in publications like *Vanity Fair*, *Dance Magazine*, *Double Magazine*, and *The New York Times*. Mr. Bozeman joined the Company in 2013. Instagram: @Jeroboamb



## 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 was 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.



## CLIFTON BROWN

(Goodyear, AZ) began his dance training at Take 5 Dance Academy and continued in the first class of the Ailey/Fordham BFA Program in Dance. 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 and 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 (Bessie). As a guest artist Mr. Brown has performed with Miami City Ballet, Rome Opera Ballet, Nevada Ballet, and Parsons Dance Company. 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.



## PATRICK COKER

(Chester, VA) grew up in a military family stationed in many places across the country. He was awarded the American Ballet Theatre's National Trainee Scholarship from 2008 to 2010. In May 2014, Mr. Coker graduated magna cum laude from the

Ailey/Fordham BFA Program, where he apprenticed with Ailey II in his final year. After graduation, he danced for Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet and went on to join Jessica Lang Dance. 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*; and LA-based BODYTRAFFIC. He was one of Jessica Lang's rehearsal associates in the creation of her ballet EN for the Ailey company in 2018. Mr. Coker joined the Company in 2019. Instagram: @pcoke

# 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.



## SOLOMON DUMAS

(Chicago, IL) (he, him, his) was introduced to dance through Ailey-Camp. 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: @tofuwithmildsauce



## GHRAI DEVORE-STOKES

(Washington, D.C.) began her dance training at DC Youth Ensemble with Carol Foster. After moving to Chicago, IL she deepened her training at the Chicago Multi-Cultural Dance Center under the tutelage of Homer Hans Bryant, where she studied ballet and

Horton, among other techniques. Before beginning her professional career in Hubbard Street 2, Ms. DeVore-Stokes trained at the Kirov Academy, Ballet Chicago, Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, American Ballet Theatre, and Alonzo King's LINES Ballet. Ms. DeVore-Stokes was a member of Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, Deeply Rooted Dance Theater 2, Hubbard Street 2, Dance Works Chicago, and Ailey II. She was the 2011 recipient of the Danish Queen Ingrid Scholarship of Honor and a 2009 recipient of the Dizzy Feet Foundation Scholarship. She was also a 2010 nominee for the first annual Clive Barnes Award. Ms. DeVore-Stokes joined the Company in 2010. Instagram: @ghrai\_



## 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.

# WHO'S WHO IN THE COMPANY



## 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 joined the company in 2019. Instagram: @j\_gilmer



## JACQUELINE GREEN

(Baltimore, MD) began her dance training at age 13 at the Baltimore School for the Arts. She is a 2011 cum laude graduate of the Ailey/Fordham BFA Program, and also trained at the Pennsylvania Regional Ballet, the Chautauqua Institution for Dance, and The School at Jacob's Pillow. She has

performed works by choreographers including Wayne McGregor, Jiří Kylián, Ronald K. Brown, and Kyle Abraham. In 2016 she performed as a guest artist with The Royal Ballet. Ms. Green is a 2018 "Bessie" Award nominee for sustained achievement, a 2015 Clive Barnes Award nominee, a 2014 dance fellowship recipient from the Princess Grace Foundation-USA, a 2010 recipient of the Dizzy Feet Foundation Scholarship, and a 2009 recipient of the Martha Hill Fund's Young Professional Award. In 2018 she performed on BET's *Black Girls Rock* honoring Judith Jamison. She was a member of Ailey II and joined the Company in 2011. Instagram: @JaGreen711



## 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, 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.



## 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 has studied at Joffrey Ballet School and The School at Jacob's Pillow and 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. Most recently, 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. She was a member of Ailey II and joined the Company in 2014.

# WHO'S WHO IN THE COMPANY



## 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.



## 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. Mr. Lebrun was a member of Ailey II and joined the Company in 2008.



## YAZMEEN LAIDLER

(Miami, FL) graduated from New World School of the Arts. She trained at Mrs. Traci Young-Bryon's Young Contemporary Dance Theatre and The Ailey School summer intensive. Ms. Laidler received her B.F.A. from 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 Jae Man Joo, Dwight Rhoden, Tommie Waheed-Evans, Doug Varone, Juel D. Lane, and Darrell Moultrie, to name a few choreographers. She has performed as a guest artist with Owen/Cox Dance and is a former company member of Ailey II. Ms. Laidler joined the company in 2018.



## RENALDO MAURICE

(Gary, IN) began his dance training with Tony Simpson and graduated from Talent Unlimited High School. He attended Emerson School for Visual and Performing Arts, studying with Larry Brewer and Michael Davis. Mr. Maurice was a scholarship student at The Ailey School, Ballet Chicago, and Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, and interned at 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 Gary, IN, and named a state representative. Mr. Maurice incorporated his passion for the arts with social responsibility by becoming the arts activist and co-artistic director of the South Shore Dance Alliance in Indiana. He was a member of Ailey II for three years, joined the Company in 2011 and rejoined in 2019. Facebook: Maurice Gardner. Instagram: @r\_maurice25

# 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 from Point Park University in

2017 with a B.F.A. in Dance 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. Ms. Mitchell joined the Company in 2019. Instagram: @corrinrachellemitchell



## BELÉN INDHIRA PEREYRA

(Lawrence, MA) began training at Boston Arts Academy, where she graduated as valedictorian, and was a member of NIA Dance Troupe at Origination Cultural Arts Center. Upon moving to New York City, Ms. Pereyra was closely mentored by Earl Mosley and danced with Camille A. Brown &

Dancers for three years, during which time she performed at The Joyce Theater, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, and Dancers Responding to AIDS' annual events Dance from the Heart and The Fire Island Dance Festival. Ms. Pereyra was an apprentice for Ronald K. Brown/Evidence, A Dance Company, and has performed with Lula Washington Dance Theater, Nathan Trice, and Roger C. Jeffrey. She has been featured in *Dance Magazine*, *Island Origins Magazine*, *Boston Magazine*, and the *Improper Bostonian*. Ms. Pereyra is also a certified SAFE® FLOOR coach. She assisted Matthew Rushing with *Uptown* for the Company in 2009 and joined in 2011.



## CHALVAR MONTEIRO

(Montclair, NJ) began training at Sharron Miller's Academy for the Performing Arts and went on to study at The Ailey School. He received his BFA in Dance from SUNY Purchase, where he performed works by Merce Cunningham, Helen Pickett, Doug Varone, Dianne McIntyre, Kevin Wynn,

and Paul Taylor. Since graduating Mr. Monteiro has worked with Sidra Bell Dance New York, Elisa Monte Dance, Keigwin + Company, BODYTRAFFIC, and most extensively with Abraham.In.Motion. He assisted Kyle Abraham in setting and creating work for Barnard College, Princeton University, Emory University, NYU Tisch School of the Arts, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and Wendy Whelan's *Restless Creature*. In April 2019 Mr. Monteiro was selected to participate in *Merce Cunningham Trust's Night of 100 Solos: A Centennial Event*. He was in Ailey II and joined the Company in 2015. To see more personal and creative interests follow Mr. Monteiro on Instagram at chlvrmntro.



## JESSICA AMBER PINKETT

(Baltimore, MD) began her dance training at Baltimore Dance Tech under the direction of Stephanie Powell. Ms. Pinkett is a proud graduate from George Washington Carver Center for Arts and Technology. She is a bronze medal recipient from the NAACP ACT-SO competition in Dance. Ms. Pinkett

has worked with choreographers including Linda-Denise Fisher-Harrell, Kirven Douthit-Boyd, Ray Mercer, Darrell Grand Moultrie, and others. She has performed as a guest artist with The Black Iris Project and was a member of Ailey II. From Towson University, she graduated with honors and earned a B.F.A. in dance performance and choreography. Ms. Pinkett has been featured in campaigns for Coach, Equinox Hotels and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Ms. Pinkett joined the company in 2018. Instagram: @jessica.a.pinkett

# WHO'S WHO IN THE COMPANY



## 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 while 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. Ms. Quinn is beyond thrilled and honored to be a part of the Ailey family and legacy. She joined the Company in 2019.



## KANJI SEGAWA

(Kanagawa, Japan) began his modern dance training with his mother, Erika Akoh, and studied ballet with Kan Horiuchi and Ju Horiuchi in Tokyo. In 1997 Mr. Segawa came to the U.S. under the Japanese Government Artist Fellowship to train at The Ailey School. Mr. Segawa was a member

of Ailey II from 2000–02 and Battleworks Dance Company from 2002–10. Mr. Segawa worked extensively with choreographer Mark Morris from 2004–11, repeatedly appearing with Mark Morris Dance Group including as a principal dancer in John Adams' *Nixon in China* at The Metropolitan Opera. In addition, Mr. Segawa has worked closely with choreographer Jessica Lang since 1999, assisting her on new creations for American Ballet Theatre, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and The National Ballet of Japan among others, and staging her work on companies, universities, and schools around the world. Mr. Segawa joined the Company in 2011.



## JAMAR ROBERTS

(Miami, FL) graduated from the New World School of the Arts. He trained at the Dance Empire of Miami, where he continues to teach, and in The Ailey School's Fellowship Program. Mr. Roberts was a member of Ailey II and Complexions Contemporary Ballet. *Dance Magazine* featured him as one

of "25 to Watch" in 2007 and on the cover in 2013. In 2016 he was a guest star with London's Royal Ballet and won Outstanding Performer at the prestigious New York Dance and Performance "Bessie" Awards. He made his Ailey II choreographic debut with his work *Gêmeos*, set to the music of Afrobeat star Fela Kuti. His works for the Company – *Members Don't Get Weary* (2017) and *Ode* (2019) – both premiered at New York City Center to critical acclaim. In 2019 Mr. Roberts was appointed the first Resident Choreographer for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. He first joined the Company in 2002.



## COURTNEY CELESTE SPEARS

(Baltimore, MD), of Bahamian descent, began formal training at the Baltimore School for the Arts under the direction of Norma Pera. She was the 2015 Denise Jefferson Memorial Scholar and graduated summa cum laude with honors from the Ailey/Fordham BFA Program with degrees in dance

and communications. Ms. Spears attended summer intensives at The Juilliard School and American Ballet Theatre, where she was named The National Training Scholar for two years. She has performed works by Camille A. Brown, Donald Byrd, Rennie Harris, and Azure Barton. Ms. Spears is a 2015 Princess Grace Award recipient and the co-founder of ArtSea Dance, an outreach and dance management company based in the Bahamas. Ms. Spears is signed with Wilhelmina Models and graduated from Harvard Business School's "Crossover Into Business" program for professional athletes. She was a member of Ailey II and joined the Company in 2018. Instagram: @bahamaballerina

# WHO'S WHO IN THE COMPANY



## CONSTANCE STAMATIOU

(Charlotte, NC) began her dance training at Pat Hall's Dance Unlimited and North Carolina Dance Theatre. 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 has been a guest performer on *So You Think You Can Dance*, *Dancing with the Stars*, Logo's *Trailblazer Honors*, and *The Today Show*. Ms. Stamatiou has danced in the films *Shake Rattle & Roll* and *Dan Pritzker's Bolden*. She was a member of Ailey II and a guest artist for Dance Grand Moultrie and Caroline Calouche & Co. She is a certified Gyrotonic and Gyrokinesis instructor and a mother of two. Ms. Stamatiou joined the Company in 2007 and rejoined in 2016. Instagram: @constance.stamatiou



## 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's 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. Website: [www.christopherrwilson.com](http://www.christopherrwilson.com). Instagram: @christopher.r.wilson



## JERMAINE TERRY

(Washington, D.C.) began his dance training in Kissimmee, Florida, at James Dance Center. He graduated cum laude with a B.F.A. in dance performance from the University of South Florida, where he received scholarships for excellence in performance and choreography. Mr.

Terry was a scholarship student at The Ailey School and a member of Ailey II, and he has performed with Buglisi Dance Theatre, Arch Dance, Dance Iquail, and Philadanco and as a guest artist on the television show *So You Think You Can Dance*. In 2013 he received the Distinguished Alumnus Award from USF for outstanding service to the arts. He has made costumes for the Company, Ailey II, Philadanco, Jessica Lang Dance, and The Black Iris Project, to name a few. His evening wear has been in Essence online as well as shot by the late Bill Cunningham for the style section of The New York Times. Please follow Mr. Terry on Instagram at Jerms83. Mr. Terry joined the Company in 2010.



## BRANDON WOOLRIDGE

(Spring Hill, FL) began his dance training at John Leggio's Center for the Performing Arts at age 11 in his hometown, where he first learned about the Company's legacy through Ailey Arts In Education. He graduated from F.W. Springstead High School and performed in a production of *Joseph*

and the *Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* at the Show Palace Dinner Theatre. Mr. Woolridge trained at The Ailey School as a scholarship student where he performed works by choreographers Ronald K. Brown, Darrell Grand Moultrie, Earl Mosley, and Troy Powell and appeared in Alvin Ailey's *Memoria* during Ailey's 60th Anniversary season at New York City Center. He was briefly a member of Ailey II before joining the Company in 2019.

# 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 92<sup>nd</sup> 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 25<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 **50<sup>th</sup> 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 50<sup>th</sup> 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 55<sup>th</sup> street in front of New York City Center. An estimated 40,000 people attend one of these events. AAADT launches its five-week 50<sup>th</sup> 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 **50<sup>th</sup> 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 40<sup>th</sup> 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.

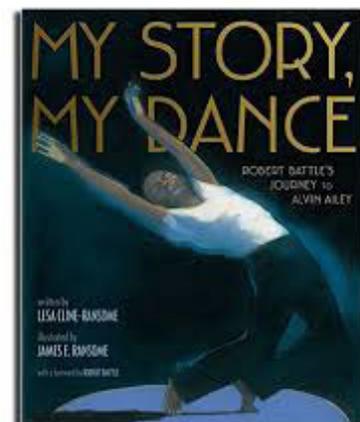
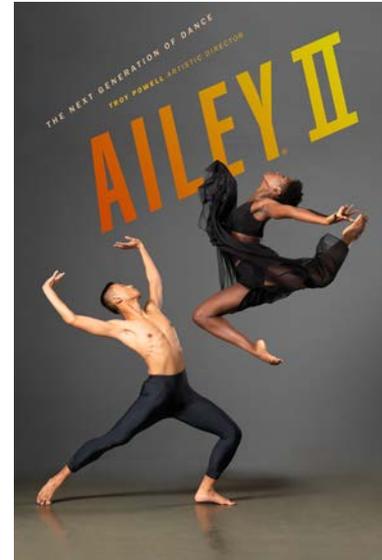
**2015 – Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater makes an historic return to South Africa** after nearly 20 years, performing in Johannesburg and Cape Town, and leading workshops, master classes, and lecture demonstrations in over two dozen schools, universities, and community centers.

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 Seniors** 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.

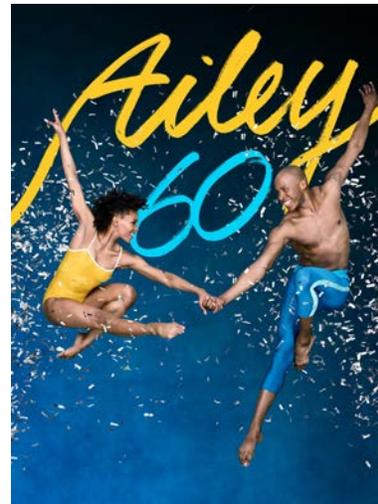
**2019** – The **Ailey Spirit Gala** launched **The Ailey School 50th anniversary celebration**, with a special performance featuring students of all ages. To honor the milestone, **one hundred students from the School performed Alvin Ailey's Revelations** in the **93rd Annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day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

In March, Ailey reinvented the way it reaches audiences globally through **Ailey All Access**, an initiative that has been viewed by over **10 million people in 121 countries**, 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 **wins TimeOut New York's "Time In" Archive Treasure award** for best archival streaming series. Vogue and Dance Magazine were among other outlets that placed works by Ailey artists on their "Best Of" lists for dance films created during the pandemic.



# WHAT CRITICS ARE SAYING ABOUT AILEY

## ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER & ROBERT BATTLE

“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

“**Battle, who carries the mantle of his stewardship with great care, not only to preserve Ailey's spirit, but also to move the company forward and expand its repertory** with new works and commissions from prominent, often groundbreaking choreographers... that legacy is accessibility. Ailey's credo was that dance comes from the people and should be given back to them in a way that resonates with their lives. Over the past 60 years, the **diversity of the audiences that this company has reached through performance and outreach is unparalleled.**”

*The Boston Globe*, Karen Campbell – April 11, 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

“**Ailey's troupe, timeless yet current. Spreading Joy With a Mastery of Multiple Styles.** Now as ever, the Ailey company is facing in multiple directions: reviving home repertory, acquiring works from elsewhere, commissioning new pieces...”

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

“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*, Brian Seibert – December 3, 2018

“... 60 years after Ailey first launched the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater as well as its educational component, The Ailey School, is still flourishing exceedingly.”

*Newsweek*, Janice Williams – December 4, 2018

“The influence and importance of the company, to both the dance world and the culture at large, are wide and multifaceted.”

*San Francisco Chronicle*, Steven Winn – April 4, 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

“**If you haven't seen Alvin Ailey, you haven't seen dance...the most exciting dance company in the world...**”

*The Huffington Post*, Michael Levin – April 28, 2017

“...some of the **greatest modern dancers in the United States**, with choreography by masters... *Its well never runs dry.*”

*The Huffington Post*, Isa Freeling – June 23, 2015

“**The next generation of Ailey is in good hands.**”

*The New York Times*, Gia Kourlas – June 12, 2015

“Under the **invigorating, strategic artistic direction** of choreographer Robert Battle, **the vision and repertory holdings of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater have felt to swell magnificently in just a few years...**”

*The Orange County Register* – Jean Lenihan – April 16, 2015

“**Alvin Ailey strikes again... We don't have to worry about the level of dancing at Alvin Ailey...**With the Ailey school and second company propelling exciting new dancers into the main company, **the level of performance is as high as it's ever been—and that's as high as it gets.**”

*New York Observer*, Robert Gottlieb – January 8, 2015

“**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

# WHAT CRITICS ARE SAYING ABOUT AILEY

## **Revelations (Alvin Ailey)**

**"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. I can't even believe bodies do that."**

Oprah Winfrey to *Entertainment Tonight* [on attending the AAADT 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala] – December 3, 2008

**"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

**"A master choreographer... *Lazarus* is about resurrection and, for Mr. Harris, that circles back to Ailey: With each dancing generation, with every performance of his 1960 masterpiece *Revelations*, Ailey is reborn. 'He's still affecting folk: black, brown, white, indifferent, whatever,' Mr. Harris said. 'He's still affecting the world on a massive scale.'"**

*The New York Times*, Gia Kourlas – December 2, 2018

**"However successful the new piece, or others in the company's broad repertoire, 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

**"*Revelations*, the masterpiece foundation of the whole enterprise and a visceral reminder of what the company encapsulates and why people keep coming back for it."**

*The New York Times*, Brian Seibert – December 3, 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* is the dance version of Rodin's 'The Thinker,' or Leonardo's 'Mona Lisa.' It is our *Rent*, our *Angels in America* our 'Let It Be.' It's the closest we get in dance to a permanent exhibit. In a word, it's a classic."**

*Chicago Tribune*, Lauren Warnecke – March 22, 2017

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

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

**"*Revelations* has been performed in 71 countries, and it reliably brings audiences to their feet, even dancing in the aisles...a sense of uplift so infectious that most people leave the theater either singing the music or trying to dance the steps."**

*The Wall Street Journal*, Pia Catton – June 16, 2014

**"...modern dance's unquestionable greatest hit, anchoring countless performances and inspiring applause before it even starts."**

*The New York Times*, Claudia La Rocco – January 10, 2008

## **AILEY & ELLINGTON PROGRAM**

### **Night Creature (Alvin Ailey)**

**"... "Night Creature" (1741, at Duke Ellington) is an old friend, it always takes me by surprise when it introduces Cuban hip motion – a joy, since the Ailey dancers are masters in the powerfully lateral use of the pelvis, now moving in figures-of-eight, now in snakier undulations... As you'd hope, the Ailey dancers look wholly at home in every part."**

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

### **Pas De Duke (Alvin Ailey)**

**"A test of physical endurance, the pas de deux still challenges performers with its unlikely balance of glittering play and high-powered technical feats from ballet, jazz and modern dance, all set to the soaring, pulsing music by Ailey's beloved Duke Ellington."**

*The New York Times*

**"...one of those special dances that lives in new ways with each new set of performers."**

*The New York Times*

### **Reflections in D (Alvin Ailey)**

**"An enthralling display of modern dance technique... a moving combination of plastic beauty and passionate expression."**

*The Sunday Times*

# WHAT CRITICS ARE SAYING ABOUT AILEY

## DANCING SPIRIT PROGRAM

**ODETTA (Matthew Rushing)** 'This Little Light of Mine' excerpt performed by Hope Boykin

"[Hope] Boykin brings the famed folk singer Odetta Holmes to life...spectacular"

*The Daily News* – November 29, 2014

## CELEBRATING GLENN ALLEN SIMS & LINDA CELESTE SIMS

"On Stage, In Marriage, These 2 Alvin Ailey Dancers Learned The Steps Together - Linda Celeste Sims and Glenn Allen Sims are two of the longest tenured dancers in the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater company — one of the best known and most loved dance companies in the country. They're also married. The pair have danced together for years, forging their love story in the hard work, pain and drama of the dance world. And yet, it endures."

*NPR*, Michel Martin & Isabel Dobrin – February 11, 2018

"The gorgeous Linda Celeste Sims, strict within her voluptuousness, and her husband, Glenn Allen Sims, with his feats of effortless-seeming partnering"

*The New York Times*, Alastair Macaulay on Alvin Ailey Dancers Return Like Conquering Heroes – December 4, 2017

"...Linda Celeste Sims and Glenn Allen Sims, who are married. Both are especially distinguished dancers..."

*The Wall Street Journal*, Robert Greskovic – December 22, 2014

### **The Winter in Lisbon (Billy Wilson)**

"... a slow blues piece danced with erotic flare by Linda Celeste Sims and Glenn Allen Sims, husband and wife... Combining sensuous intensity with light humor, their dialogue had theatrical touches they repeated like punctuation marks."

*The Bay State Banner*, Susan Saccoccia – May 4, 2017

### **Memoria (Alvin Ailey)**

"Here in a long skirt, a radiant and effortless Mrs. Sims found ways to let her limbs reach and soar and shimmer..."

*The Wall Street Journal*, Robert Greskovic – December 22, 2014

### **Love Songs (Alvin Ailey)**

"The clarity in the piece comes from Sims' presence and his attention to not over-embellish his movements, and also from the vocabulary of the Horton technique... With one sweep of his arm, Sims seemed to shift time, and the dignity of his stance demonstrated power in simplicity."

*Globe Dancer* – April 16, 2016

"... a brilliant showcase for Glenn Allen Sims' passionate dancing."

*Chicago Tribune*, Laura Molzhan – March 9, 2016

### **Night Creature (Alvin Ailey)**

"Linda Celeste Sims, Antonio Douthit-Boyd, Glenn Allen Sims — were resplendent, lending indelible phrasing to Mr. Ailey's braiding of ballet, modern dance and Horton technique..."

*The New York Times*, Gia Kourlas – December 10, 2014

"Ms. Sims luxuriated in the swing of sultry, swaying hips, the leader of a pack magnetized by her every move...Ms. Sims, by turns introspective and ecstatic, jubilant and stern, embodied things much larger than herself. Her dancing seemed to emanate outside the theater walls..."

*The New York Times*, Siobhan Burke – December 17, 2014

### **Revelations (Alvin Ailey)** 'Fix Me, Jesus' excerpt

"They have performed 'Fix Me, Jesus' nearly 2,000 times, and they have been cast in some 130 of the troupe's 250 other ballets — as a couple in about 40 of those."

*Vanity Fair*, Wayne Lawson – December 19, 2014

"...gripping Fix Me, Jesus section, danced with beautiful control by Linda Celeste Sims and Glenn Allen Sims."

*The Associated Press*, Jocelyn Noveck – November 29, 2012

# WHAT CRITICS ARE SAYING ABOUT AILEY

## DANCING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE PROGRAM

### *Shelter (Jawole Willa Jo Zollar)*

“... a **wake-up call about homelessness**, in several senses. It’s rougher and rawer than much of the Ailey repertory, and the **company’s women perform it with astonishing force.**”

*The New Yorker* – December 18-25 Issue

“**A Raw, Pointed Revival...** “Shelter” **may be the work that speaks most strongly to the anxieties of the moment.**”

*The New York Times*, Brian Seibert – November 29, 2017

“**Jawole Willa Jo Zollar’s 1988 work on homelessness, remains relevant... addresses the physical and emotional deprivation of homeless people — more broadly, the effects of displacement and the resilience people must have in order to survive.**”

*The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Cynthia Bond Perry – February 10, 2018

### *Untitled America (Kyle Abraham)*

“**Mr. Abraham’s vocabulary, with its rich mix of street and studio suggesting a body at war with itself, is potent and explosive and wonderfully of the moment.**”

*The New York Times*, Brian Seibert – June 12, 2016

“**This is something our culture should be looking at...** Kudos to Ailey— and Abraham— for keeping the revelations relevant.”

*Dance Magazine*, Wendy Perron – December 15, 2015

“**...potent... a powerful, poetic portrait** of people overwhelmed, and torn apart internally and from each other, by oppressive forces.”

*Miami Herald*, Jordan Levin – February 24, 2017

## THE DANCERS

“Celebrating the company’s 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, **the dancers prove why it has endured.**”

*The Washington Post*, Sarah L. Kaufman – December 10, 2019 [The Year’s Best Dance Works]

“**...how fabulously individual the dancers all are. Each is an immediately distinct character ...**”

*The New York Times*, Alastair Macaulay – December 4, 2017

“**Vernard J. Gilmore, one of the company’s most appealing long-term performers...**”

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

“**Clifton Brown, for example, who first joined the company 20 years ago, dances the incredibly demanding and exposed solo, ‘I Wanna Be Ready’... His focus, commitment and presence are transfixing.**”

*The Guardian*, Lyndsey Winship – September 6, 2019

“For the first time in its history, **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre has a resident choreographer** other than its late founder: the **beloved star dancer Jamar Roberts.**”

*The New Yorker*, Brian Seibert – December 9, 2019

“**Jamar Roberts** has long been one of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater’s **most thrilling performers, bringing his sinuous power to whatever the company’s wide-ranging repertory throws at him.**”

*Dance Magazine* – November 28, 2018

“**That Goddess Quality? This Ailey Dancer’s Got It...** now a **supremely elegant** member of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater **...her facility is as natural as her poise. Regal and soft-spoken**, she has delicate, feline bone structure and willowy limbs – she’s 5-foot-9 – which adds to her unaffected elegance. She can be soft, she can be unyielding, but **her intensity radiates across the stage**, pulling your gaze like a magnet... **Ms. Green** has intensified that pull with a new level of confidence, blossoming in new and classic works.”

*The New York Times*, Gia Kourlas – December 24, 2019 (on **Jacqueline Green**)

“**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

“**...two of the troupe’s most impressive talents, Jacquelin Harris and Chalvar Monteiro...**”

*The Wall Street Journal*, Robert Greskovic – December 24, 2019

“**Jeroboam Bozeman, whose broad shoulders and velvety fluidness give him a singular, rugged grace...** Mr. Bozeman’s steely performances are **more of a slow burn, and that’s even better...** At 6-foot-2, Mr. Bozeman has a **grounded stage presence that radiates both heat and inner calm.**”

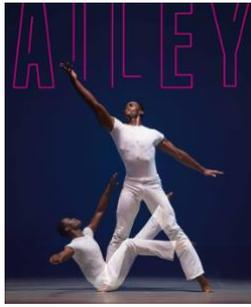
*The New York Times*, Gia Kourlas – December 25, 2015

“**25 to Watch, 2019: the 25 up-and-coming artists we believe are ready to take our field by storm ... Emotions flood through Khalia Campbell’s every move...** the Bronx native **holds nothing back onstage, generously giving her all to the work—not just physically, but spiritually.**”

*Dance Magazine*, Charmaine Warren – December 16, 2019

**ALVIN AILEY**  
**AMERICAN DANCE THEATER**

**PRESS COVERAGE**



## Broadcast Highlights 2020-21 Season

**CBS Sunday Morning:** The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater celebrates 60 years of modern dance and creative expression

**ABC – Good Morning America 3<sup>rd</sup> Hour:** Robert Battle discusses the company’s pandemic pivot and debuts new film, ‘Wade in the Water’

**TED Talk: “Revelations from a Lifetime in Dance”**  
Judith Jamison shares divine reflections about her five-decade career and introduces excerpts of Ailey’s classic works *Cry* and *Revelations*



**HBO Vice:** How Alvin Ailey Dance Theater is making modern dance "pop" again

**ELLE:** Dancer Samantha Figgins Finds Balance

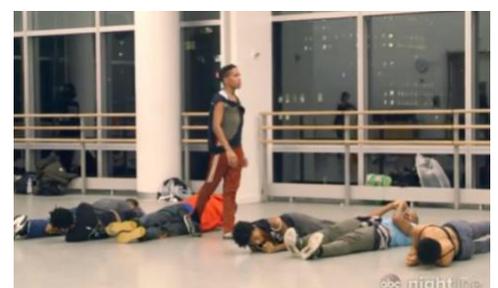
**ABC7 NY:** Mom, daughter bridge generation gap at Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater



**ABC7 NY:** Celebrating 50 years of Alvin Ailey’s Ailey School

**NBC - The Today Show:** See Alvin Ailey dancers perform ‘Revelations’ live

**ABC - Nightline:** The legacy of Alvin Ailey, celebrating the Company’s 60th Anniversary



*(Click on images for full video)*

## Radio Highlights

**NPR:** “Celebrating ‘Revelations’ In These Times” – listen [here](#).

**NPR:** “An ‘Ode’ To Victims Of Gun Violence – From Alvin Ailey Dancers” – listen [here](#).

**WNYC:** “Jamar Roberts, the First Resident Choreographer at Alvin Ailey” – listen [here](#).

**WNYC:** “Donald Byrd’s Theory of Disruption” – listen [here](#).

T&C HISTORY

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PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW ECCLES

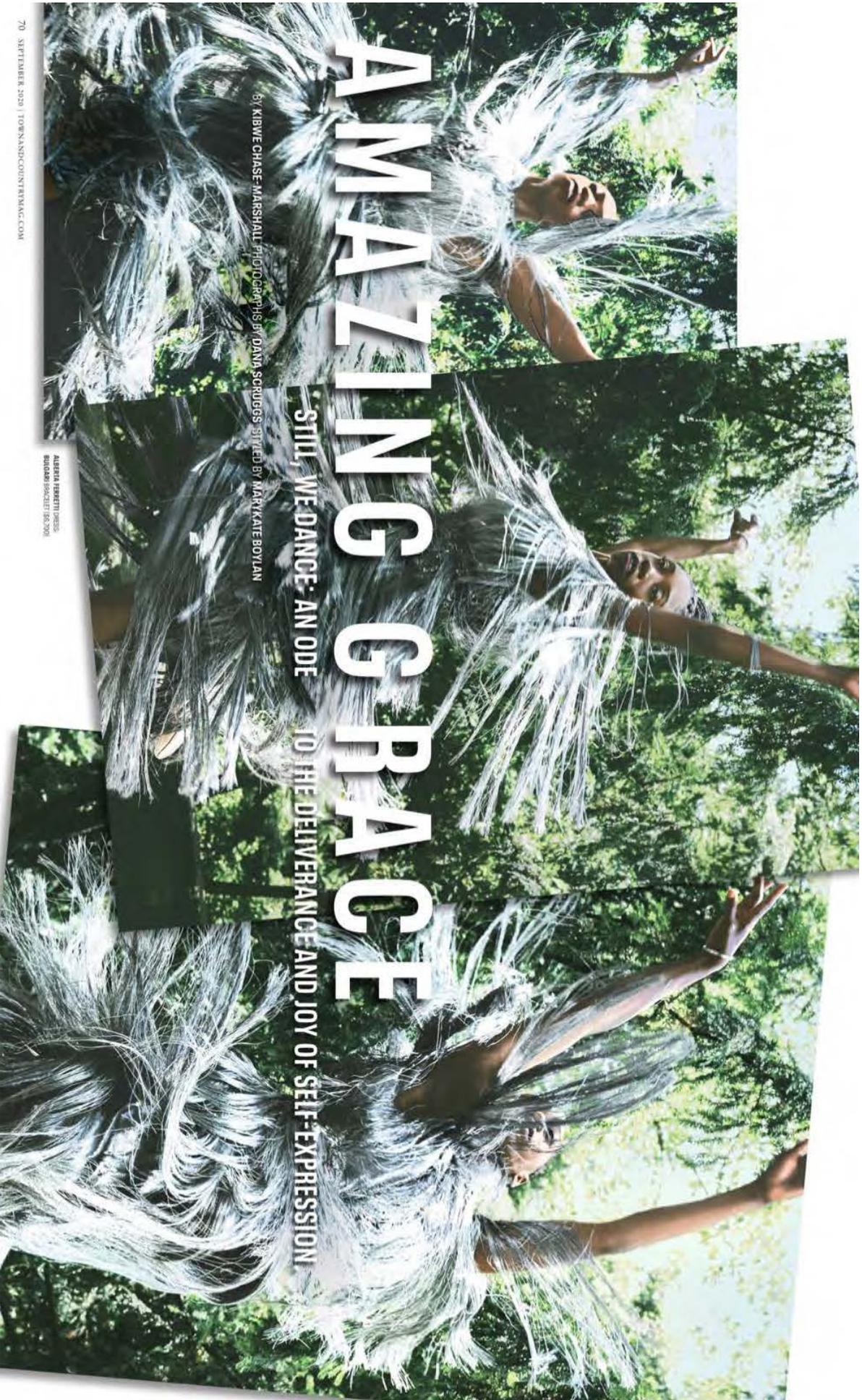
ANDREW ECCLES (DANCERS)

2008

MORE WILL BE REVEALED

"Every December I attend an Alvin Ailey performance for my birthday (okay, I missed one year to see *Hamilton*)," says Sherrilyn Ifill, president and director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. While we don't know if this annual ritual will be possible in 2020 (which marks the 60th anniversary of Ailey's *Revelations*, performed here by Linda Celeste Sims and Glenn Allen Sims), we do know that we need it more than ever. "Seeing Ailey on my birthday is like a rebirth. For just a little while I'm on a journey with these exceptional dancers to restore myself by tapping into our heritage, our artistry, our resilience, and our soul. I emerge renewed and inspired, grounded and lifted."





# AMAZING GRACE

STILL, WE DANCE - AN ODE TO THE DELIVERANCE AND JOY OF SELF-EXPRESSION

BY KIBWE CHASE MARSHALL PHOTOGRAPHS BY DANA SCORUGGS STYLED BY MARK KATE BOYLAN

AUSTIN KASSETTI HAIR  
BUNDLES @KASSETTI HAIR.COM







AKA THE KINGS OF THE COURT  
 FROM THE MOVIE 'THE KINGS OF THE COURT'  
 (STYLING: FORBES BEEHIVE)

Head by Aida Williams for T&E Hair, Makeup by  
 Joseph. Shoes by Marc Jacobs at Henry Arino.  
 Location courtesy of Central Park Conservancy.

# The New York Times

## Realigning for a Eurythmic Convergence

By: Gia Kourlas

March 21, 2020

# Realigning for a Eurythmic Convergence

Set adrift and apart, dancers from Alvin Ailey's group film, then merge, pieces of a whole.

By GIA KOURLAS

As the lyrics go in "I Been 'Buked" — the opening section of Alvin Ailey's masterpiece, "Revelations" — "There is trouble all over this world."

Don't we know it. Last week after Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater abruptly ended its tour and sent its dancers home, Danica Paulos — who creates content on Instagram for the group — asked her fellow company members if they were, she said, "down to create some positivity and some inspiration."

The idea came from the dancer Miranda Quinn: The opening sequence of "The Brady Bunch" popped into her head. "How they're all in little squares," she said. "That made me think of how we're all being quarantined and are supposed to stay separate, but this was a way for all of us to still be dancing together and creating together even though we're apart."

Ten dancers, including three who are re-tiring this year — Ms. Paulos, Akua Nomi Parker and Hope Boykin — grace the resulting video, in which they are shown in their own environments performing "Buked." Ms. Quinn described it as "very vulnerable and about creating and nurturing hope through community," adding that she thought it "was perfect for what's happening now."

The dancers are shown in squares performing the deep plies and overhead reaches of the choreography, with each adding to the last like an undulating prayer, until they all appear onscreen, lowering their arms with their palms facing forward. As the clips accumulate, we see family members, dogs and children.

The result is an artifact, elegant in its brevity: a work of art repurposed from another work of art that speaks to the moment and shows dancers performing, yes, but also just being themselves in their private spaces.

Ms. Paulos plans on creating more videos every week with different dancers, whom she will cast herself. Next up, a part of Renée Harrie's, "Lazarus," after a gunshot when, she said, "all of the men are dancing and some women come in and it's two minutes of great dance."

She would also like to showcase Ailey's "Cry." And the dancer Patrick Coker suggested "Sinner Man," from "Revelations," but with his virtuosic jumps and spins, it requires space — a studio apartment would never cut it. In a text, he wrote to Ms. Paulos, "If anyone wants to do 'Sinner Man,' I'd be down to meet in a park."

"I was like, 'Awesome,'" she said. "That would be beautiful."



Images from Danica Paulos's video of "I Been 'Buked" from Alvin Ailey's "Revelations," with bits from Akua Nomi Parker, above, and other Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater dancers.



By: Kathryn Shattuck

August 9, 2020

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, AUGUST 9, 2020

AR 3

### Headliner

MY TEN

# Robert Battle Likes to Cook, and Connect



TONY CERVILLA/  
THE NEW YORK TIMES

"I always say that pessimism and anger is a place that I visit, but my permanent address is optimism and hope," said Robert Battle, the artistic director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Since the pandemic lockdown in March, Battle has been consumed with keeping the company in shape. Until Wednesday, a collaboration among Battle, his predecessor, Judith Jamison, and the choreographer Rennie Harris will stream on Ailey All Access. Battle has recently been considering the organization's role in the Black Lives Matter movement. "I've been thinking a lot about the notion of, before it was a hashtag or a movement, that the Ailey company was demonstrating that Black lives matter in all of the work that we do," he said. "But it's almost not enough to live it. You have to say it expressly, that this is what we do and we are in solidarity. It's not that we need to reinvent the wheel, but we need to roll it." These days Battle is hunkered down in Connecticut, tending his vegetable garden alongside his dog, North. He elaborated on the 10 things that have kept his mood aloft. These are edited excerpts from the conversation. KATHRYN SHATTUCK

#### 1 Sarah Vaughan's 'Sassy Swings The Tivoli' (1963)

My mother and a friend of hers, they would listen to Billy Eckstine and Ella Fitzgerald, but mostly Sarah Vaughan. When I was a kid, they would sit on the front porch, have a glass of wine, and that was their way of winding down. My mom's friend bought me a cassette tape of her singing, and I played it until it snapped. That passion for Sarah Vaughan has never left me.

#### 2 His Piano

My mother played piano for the church that I grew up going to, and there was a Kimball piano at home. They discovered that I had an ear for music and so they got me piano lessons. I studied until I got involved in dance, at about 11 or 12, and then it kind of disappeared on me. But I've always needed to have a piano around, even if I just play the same songs that I already know.

#### 3 Cherished Family Photos

My grandfather raised me since I was 3 weeks old, and I think that's where my sense of strength and duty and perseverance comes from. He only made it to the third grade because his parents died and he had to raise his siblings. My mother inspires me because of her artistic inclinations. She nurtured that performer in me. And although I was being bullied in my neighborhood, Liberty City [in Miami], I had a whole different message at home — that being an artist was almost kind of normal. And of course Alvin Ailey, so that I'm always reminded of the shoulders on which I stand.

#### 4 Tabitha Brown's Videos

Tabitha Brown I found because she was going on this journey of becoming a vegan. Coming from where I come from, I didn't know a lot of African-American people that were vegetarian or vegan. Sometimes the way she talks about it, I'm that close to trying. And then the meat part of me gets the best of me. Because I love ribs and steak and it's just — I'm sorry. I can't.

#### 5 Maya Angelou

I hardly get through a speech or an interview without saying some quote that I've gotten from Maya Angelou. Her life, you know from "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings," it's really a life well lived. And she wasn't afraid to express those things that were difficult for her. So I connected with the poetry. She did, for me, act as a kind of guide without her even knowing it.

I hardly get through a speech or an interview without saying some quote that I've gotten from Maya Angelou.

#### 6 Trying New Recipes

Cooking, it's almost like making a dance, except nobody complains when you say, "Slam yourself to the floor." The notion of starting with these few ingredients, or sometimes a lot of ingredients, and slowly developing the flavor — there's just something about the practice that really excites me and relaxes me and gives me some sense of control. I can't change the pandemic, but I can certainly make a mean fried chicken with almond flour.

#### 7 Dancers Connecting

When this whole thing went down and we came off the road, Miranda Quinn, who was a new dancer, had the idea of doing a "Brady Bunch" version of the first part of "Revelations." The dancers in their different homes — you could see the dogs running past — they made it very real. And it caught fire on social media, which led to us codifying it into something called Ailey All Access. They also did DancerDiaries, where dancers would talk about how they were feeling in this moment, and physicalize it and verbalize it in a way that was really touching and beautiful. Their need to connect with audiences no matter what was really inspiring.

#### 8 Home Gym

It keeps me sane because I no longer dance, but we still need to get moving and get that energy out as most dancers will testify to. So it's been a nice little respite, and it's hard to make excuses when it's literally two steps from my bedroom. But I still find a way to make excuses.

#### 9 Robin Roberts on 'Good Morning America'

She's such a fan of the company, and I just love her indomitable spirit. I've watched her for years through some of the tough times in her life. People like that have so much to teach us about grace under fire and about courage being not the absence of fear but the presence of it, and the desire to go forward anyway.

#### 10 Backyard Time

If you had asked somebody who knew me years ago and you'd said, "Oh yeah, he has a vegetable garden and a dog," they would have said, "You have the wrong person. No way." But being in nature sort of changed my feelings around. It's those little things that you can control, watching a tomato plant go from this little nothing and struggle up then bear fruit. And dogs I love because no matter what, they're happy to see you. It doesn't hurt if you have a rib in your mouth. Then they're doubly happy to see you.

# The New York Times

## Seeing the Dancer as Goddess: An Ailey Dancer's Goddess Quality

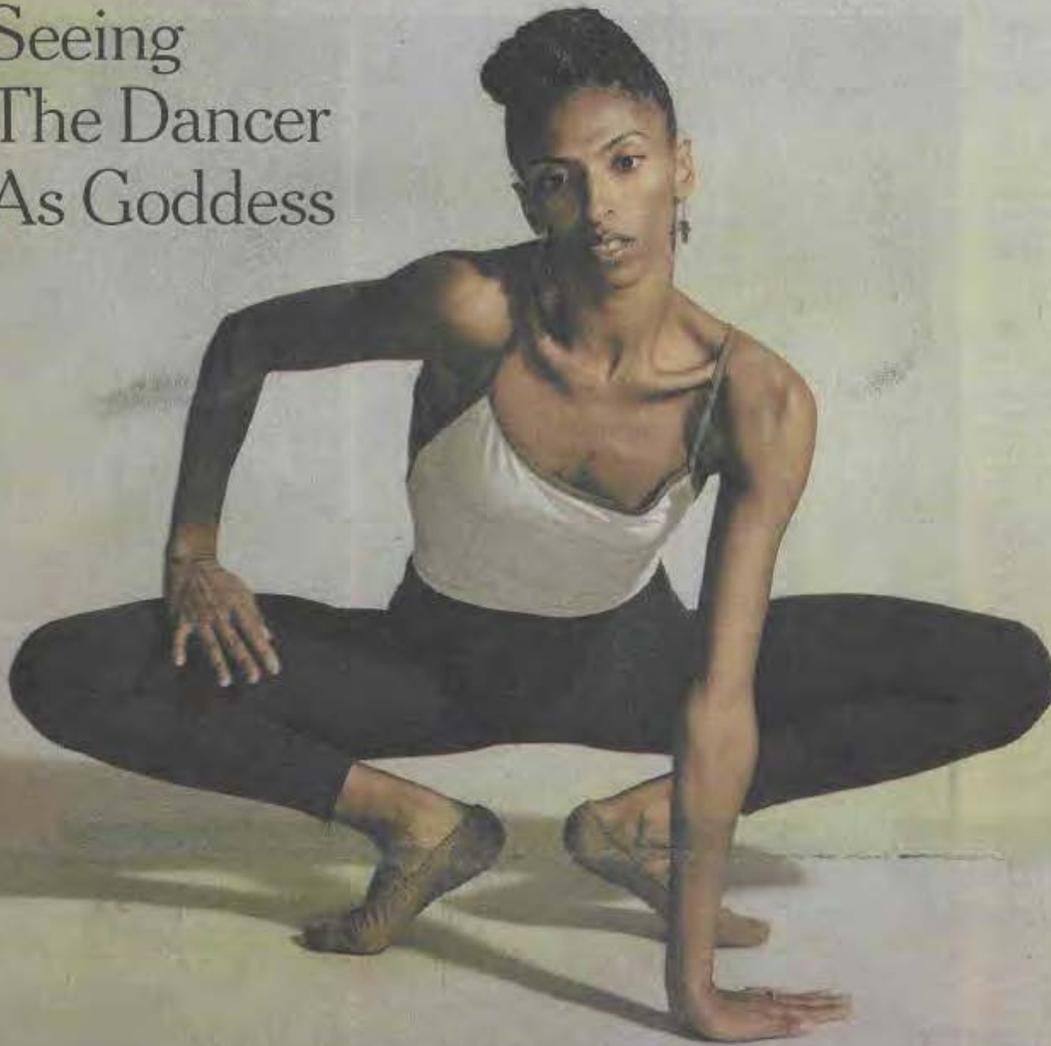
January 2, 2020

By: Gia Kourlas

### Arts

The New York Times

## Seeing The Dancer As Goddess



ERIC TAVANER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

This season, the Ailey member Jacqueline Green has reached a new level.

By GIA KOURLAS

Jacqueline Green was a shy 13-year-old when her mother, considering possible schools in Baltimore, observed two qualities that her daughter possessed.

"You're the artsy child," Ms. Green recalled her saying. "You're flexible."

Soon after, Ms. Green found herself at a dance audition for Baltimore School for the

Arts. It was not only her first audition, it was also her first ballet class. "I had on Payless tights and shoes, and I don't know where we found a leotard," Ms. Green said. "I had my hair slicked back in this bun and I thought, 'People actually do this? Holding your arms out is tiring.'"

But then there was the flexibility test. As she put it, "I was like, oh, I've got this — I watch TV in this position."

She was accepted. That Ms. Green, now a supremely elegant member of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, began training so late is remarkable, but her facility is as natural as her poise. Regal and soft-spoken, she has delicate, feline bone structure and willowy limbs — she's 5-foot-9 — which add to her unaffected elegance. She can be soft, she can be unyielding, but her intensity re-

CONTINUED ON PAGE C5

"I've learned to trust myself," said Jacqueline Green, who took up dance relatively late.

# An Ailey Dancer's Goddess Quality

CONTINUED FROM PAGE C1

diates across the stage, pulling your gaze like a magnet.

During the company's annual City Center season, Ms. Green has intensified that pull with a higher level of confidence, blossoming in new and classic works. Playing a witness figure, she was a standout in Donald Byrd's "Greenwood," a premiere about the 1921 massacre in Tulsa, Okla. "I loved her in 'Greenwood,'" said Judith Jamison, Ailey's artistic director emerita. "That she held that stage that long?"

"She was like a bulwark," Ms. Jamison added. "She was like the ship."

It has also been revealing to see Ms. Green in older works like "Memoria," which Ailey choreographed after the death of a friend. Moving from a place of sorrow to one of joy, Ms. Green was almost a spirit — ethereal and stately — as she floated inside Keith Jarrett's shimmering score.

"She really seems to be in command of her instrument in a way that she hit another level," Robert Battle, the company's artistic director, said. "It's like when someone plays a wind instrument and takes it to a place where there's just enough air to be in hearing range without shouting each note."

Ms. Green, 30, was among nine dancers hired by Mr. Battle when he became artistic director in 2011. At the time she was in the second company, Ailey II.

"Everything around that audition was intense," she said. "I felt excited, but New York can be a big distraction and be a bit overwhelming, and there was everyone saying, 'Oh, you could get the job, you're go-



ing to do this, I can so see you there.' I'm an introvert in an extrovert world, and I just need quiet."

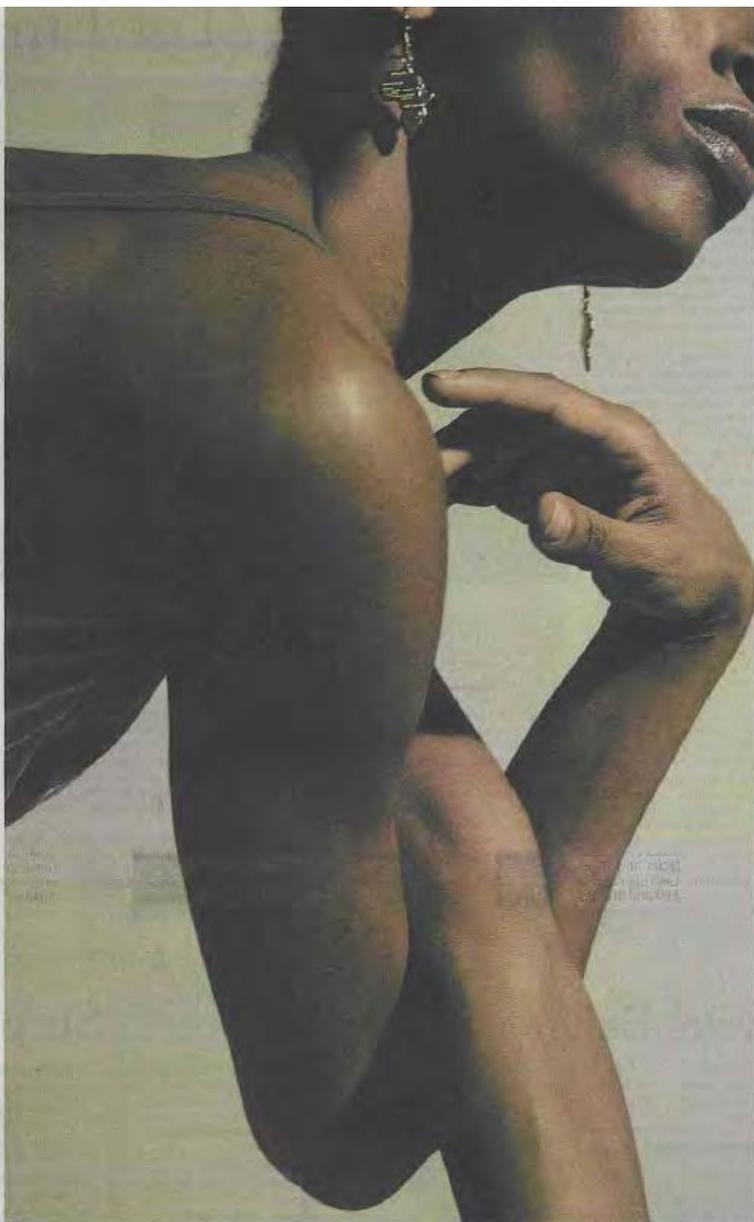
So she decamped for a few days to Chicago, where her best friend, Preston Miller — now her fiancé — lived. "I was like, 'O.K. It's calmer there, I'll be around family,'" she said. "So I just went, took class, relaxed. I ate. I did what I needed to do."

When she returned to New York, she was ready for the audition — and, of course, got in. But Mr. Battle said he knew he wanted her for the main company even before she auditioned. She had impressed him in an Ailey II performance of "Shards," another work by Mr. Byrd.

"To me, she represents what survives our ancestors," he said. "She has that goddess, queenly quality just in her cheekbones. There's something about her that feels like something from the past — like the strength and the survival of so many strong black women that came before."

Ms. Green was introduced to the company while still at Baltimore School for the Arts. Linda-Denise Fisher-Harrell, then an Ailey dancer — and a ravishing one at that — had also trained there and took a class with the students. "I still remember exactly what she did," Ms. Green said. It was an exercise at the barre in which the extended leg folded until the foot reached the knee.

Ms. Green was blown away by Ms. Fisher-Harrell's beauty, and remembers thinking: "Oh, my God, this is what they're trying to get us to do. And she looks like me. She was a black woman and she was from



PHOTOGRAPH BY DAN TAVNER



Jacqueline Green, who joined the Alvin Ailey company in 2011, has become notable because of her flexibility and elegance.

studio and create, she said, "moments of joy, pleading and hallucinatory Holy Ghost."

At first she was hesitant, but then she directed herself to simply figure out what felt good. "Slowly it morphed into something kind of overwhelming," Ms. Green said. "Do you know how you can get tingling? I remember not wanting to come out of the solo because it felt so good. So to lose control, to let it happen is new for me."

But when she's not being genuine? It feels like work. Now, though, "it's a lot easier to let go," she said. "It takes some courage and bravery to do that, and maybe because of my seniority in the company I feel I'm getting that more and more. If I'm going to be a role model I just have to be completely who I am. I do feel different. Going on instinct is a big thing this year."

This season, a highlight for Ms. Green has been performing in the all-female cast of Jamar Roberts's "Ode," a powerful and poetic exploration of the effects of gun violence. (The dance is also performed with an all-male cast.)

"There was a period of time when there was a whole bunch of police targeting black people and we still had to come in and perform," she said. "One day, it was like the fifth person in two weeks and everybody was crying. People had on sunglasses trying to cover it up. I knew I still had to do my job, but my heart wasn't connected to it because I was torn as a person. I saw people that looked like me. It was like it had happened to me."

And it felt close to home. Sandra Bland, arrested on a traffic violation in Texas and later found hanging in her cell, was a childhood friend of Ms. Green's fiancé, Mr. Roberts's "Ode" is more than just a dance.

"It's beyond steps," Ms. Green said, "which all dance should be. I feel like I might be crying by the end. We have to let out years of our frustrations. That's what this dance calls for."

Baltimore and she sounded like me, and I was like, wait — she gets paid to travel and dance and who does she work for?"

With Ms. Fisher-Harrell's encouragement, Ms. Green made her way to the company, first through the Ailey/Fordham B.F.A. program and then at Ailey II. Ms. Jamison called Ms. Green "one of my absolutely favorite-favorite dancers," and added, "Sometimes I don't know if she even knows how gorgeous she is."

Her earliest impression of Ms. Green? "All legs and arms and with a future," Ms. Jamison said. "It wasn't all coordinated yet, but it was still stunning and memorable when you saw her come onstage. All the parts have to come together, and it takes time."

When Ms. Green joined the main com-

pany, the new dancers had two weeks to learn material for a 12-week tour. "I remember going to the locker room and sitting down at the end of the day and thinking, 'What did I get myself into? I'm really overwhelmed. I'm really sad because I feel overwhelmed. You have those moments where you feel like: Am I even a good dancer? Why did they hire me?'"

It got better. She learned how to rehearse and how the company works. "The scheduling and the rules and the contracts — it's really like you need a course," she said.

As Ms. Green relies more on her instincts, her dancing has become more authoritative. "I've learned to trust myself," she said. "I've lived more."

When she was working on a solo in "Greenwood," Mr. Byrd told her to go into a

## 25 to Watch: Khalia Campbell

By: Charmaine Warren

January 2020 Issue

**Breakout stars, paradigm shifters, game changers.** Our annual list of the dancers, choreographers and companies that are on the verge of skyrocketing has a knack for illuminating where the dance world is headed. Here they are: the 25 up-and-coming artists we believe are ready to take our field by storm.

Oluwadamilare "Dare" Ayerinde | Luis Beltran |  
Khalia Campbell | Jay Carlen | Kara Chan | Zimmi Coker |  
Julie Crothers | Tatiana Desardouin | Joyce Edwards |  
Hannah Garner | Gabrielle Hamilton | Luke Hickey |  
Airi Igarashi | Tommie Kesten | LED | Maye Man |  
Annie Morgan | Mira Nodan | Tobias Proetorius |  
Abdiel Figueroa Reyes | Joseph Sissens | Maya Taylor |  
Lizzie Tripp | Ashley R.T. Yergens | Zenn Zubyk



Campbell in Darrell  
Grand Moultrie's  
*Ounce of Faith*

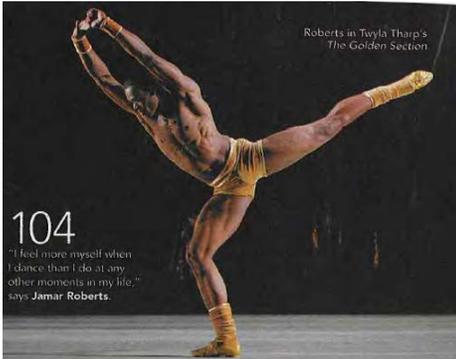
## KHALIA CAMPBELL

**Dancer, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater**  
Emotions flood through Khalia Campbell's every move. As "the umbrella woman" in Ailey's *Revelations*, her torso and arms ripple with joy. As a soloist in Darrell Grand Moultrie's *Ounce of Faith*, she turns heads with dancing that's smooth and silky, yet sharp and purposeful.

Campbell first stood out as a long-legged gazelle on the Ailey II stage. But since joining the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 2018, she's become even more commanding. Proud of her role in the company's legacy, the Bronx native holds nothing back onstage, generously giving her all to the work—not just physically, but spiritually. —Charmaine Warren

Why I Dance: Jamar Roberts

December 2019 Issue



why dance

# Jamar Roberts

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater dancer and resident choreographer

Some of my earliest memories are of being outside in the blazing heat of Miami's eternal summer, my friends and cousins and I all gathered around a boom box, blasting the best mixtapes we could make. All it took was for that one song that everyone loved for us to start dancing like mad. And in all of our preteenaged glory we began to show off for one another the latest moves we learned from movies and music videos. The Kid 'n Play, the running man, the moon-walk, the stomp-and-grind.

We invented step routines or worked tirelessly at perfecting what is better known nowadays as twerking. With each attempt, we would put a new spin on the moves to make them our own, in hopes of putting the others to complete shame. But more so to simply give them something to laugh about. This is where dance began for me. Dance as play.

Dancing has always been a huge part of the culture that I grew up in. The freedom and agency over one's own body was always permissible, especially upon hearing your favorite song. Even as a kid, I witnessed the power of dance and its ability to focus the mind, liberate the body, lift the spirit and bring people together.

It comes very naturally to me: I feel more myself when I dance than I do at any other moments in my life. It's where I am my most honest and my imagination is unbound. Dance is my playground, and the music is my best friend. Just as it's always been. ■



"Dance is my playground, and the music is my best friend."

Poetry In Motion

By: Keziah Weir

September 2019 Issue

Vanities **Fashion**



Alvin Ailey's Courtney Celeste Spears and Jeroboam Bozeman, photographed in New York City.

Valentino gown, \$30,000. (Valentino boutiques nationwide)  
MOUNSER earring, \$150. (mounser.com)

HAIR PRODUCTS BY BUNBLE AND BUMBLE; MAKEUP BY PAT McGRATH LABS; NAIL ENAMEL BY CHANEL; GROOMING PRODUCTS BY AUGUSTINUS BARBER; HAIR BY CHIKA NISHIYAMA; MAKEUP AND GROOMING BY KIM WEBER; MANICURE BY MEGUMI YAMAMOTO; PHOTOGRAPHED AT PIER 39; FOR DETAILS, GO TO VFCOM/CREDITS

**POETRY IN MOTION** At Valentino, words, passion, and fashion collide *By Keziah Weir*

In an ode to freedom of expression, Valentino creative director Pierpaolo Piccioli commissioned poets Greta Bellamacina, Yrsa Daley-Ward, Robert Montgomery, and Mustafa the Poet for original work, which was collected in a slim volume

called *On Love*. Selections, like 23-year-old Grammy winner Mustafa's poignant line, pictured above, appear on the clothing itself. The gist: Love triumphs.

The notion resonates with Alvin Ailey dancer Courtney Celeste Spears, currently closing out an international

tour. Ailey's signature ballet, *Revelations*, is a bluesy, gospel-filled celebration of black American heritage; its exultant ending translates to audiences from New York to Copenhagen. "No matter what language barrier, race, ethnicity, religion," Spears says, "love is love." **■**

## 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

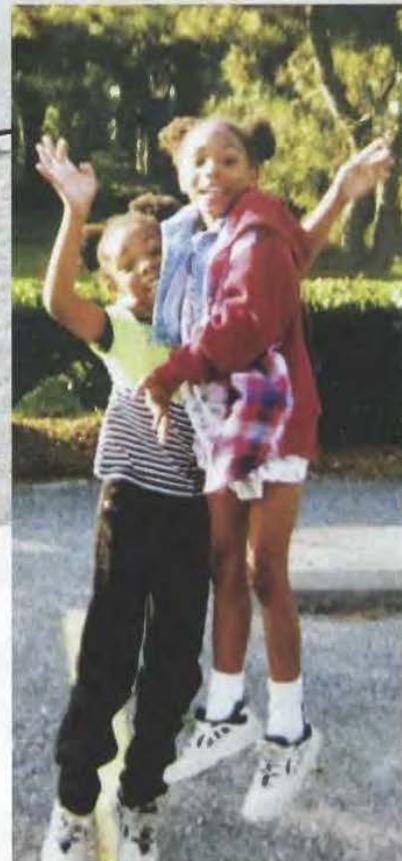
### How Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Samantha Figgins' hearing loss has affected her dancing

*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*

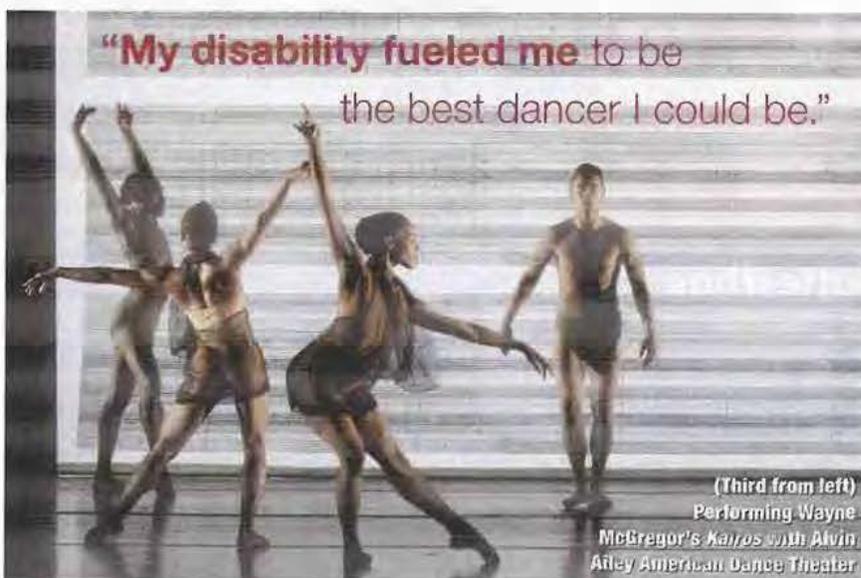
miss something important. Even standing at the barre on my right side would make me uneasy. My hearing aids have opened my world in so many ways—from things like feeling more balanced when dancing to being excited about conversations and interactions. But it's become clear to me that my work ethic and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

(FROM TOP) ANDREW ECCLES; COURTESY SAMANTHA FIGGINS; [2] COURTESY SAMANTHA FIGGINS; PAUL KOINIK; COURTESY ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER



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

## Judith Jamison Takes Us Through 60 Years of Alvin Ailey's Brilliance

By: Britni Danielle

May 3, 2019



When Judith Jamison joined the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1965, there were 10 dancers in the company. Today, six decades after Ailey and a small group of black dancers gave their inaugural performance at the 92nd Street Y in New York City, his legacy now includes more than 250 original ballets, 30 dancers, a robust educational and training program, and sold-out performances all across the globe.

According to Jamison, who Ailey picked to lead the company as its artistic director in 1989, working with the visionary founder was "a spiritual experience."

"When you're working with someone who you love working with it's like a spiritual experience," she says via phone from her home in New York. "There's an intimacy involved that when you have a rehearsal you're standing in a really sacred place and when someone's creating something you, or if you're writing something, it's a very special place to be."

While many have often cited Jamison as Ailey's muse, the veteran dancer says everyone he worked with inspired him in some way.

"We're all a part of his legacy, generation by generation," she explains. "But if you had the pleasure of having this man stand with you to push forward your blackness, your heritage, your history, your culture and say, 'You kings and queens get out on the stage and show what excellence is and how much you love doing what you're doing — and you better be good at it,' you can't help but feel blessed, according to Jamison.

As the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater prepares for its Lincoln Center season, what better way to reflect on the impact of Ailey's genius than by taking a look at some rarely-seen images from over the years and talking with Jamison, one of the people who worked closely by his side and knew him best.

### Life Lessons From Mr. Ailey

"There are a few of us left who actually worked with Mr. Ailey," Jamison says, noting she still calls him Mr. Ailey out of respect for her mentor. One lesson that has stuck with her over the years is that he always reminded each dancer to stay humble.

"Remember where you came from, always have that in mind," Jamison says, repeating Ailey's advice. "Remember this gift that you have, who you have to give it back to, and who you have to share it with."



According to Jamison, Ailey would also remind the dancers to ask themselves, "Who are you doing these performances for anyway? Is it to make yourself feel all puffed up, or to share something with the audience that brings them back to their humanity, and brings them back to who they are as people?"

For Jamison and Ailey, the answer was clear.

Ailey's Legacy? Excellence

Though millions of people have seen the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in person, Jamison doesn't believe the visionary behind it all was thinking about the impact of his work after he was gone. "When you're in it, and you're actually doing something, you're thinking of what you're doing," she explains.

But that doesn't mean Ailey did not have a distinct point of view. "We knew we were celebrating the modern dance tradition of our country, our culture, and our traditions," she says. "Beyond that, we knew about the generosity of the art form. If you could dance, he would say, 'If you were blue with polka dots then you could be in this company if you were excellent.'

"The mantra of excellence and loving what you do, and being who you are as a person — and loving yourself and understanding yourself, and keeping that clear — was clear to him," she says.

### Very Black, Very Proud



When he started the dance company in 1958, Ailey wanted black folks to control their own narratives and the way their stories were told.

"I think that he was thinking that we needed our images — our multi-layered selves — exhibited on stage. We were being seen in a certain light and portrayed by other people, and he thought it was very profound to say something about our culture — our African American culture, where it came from, and what's happened in the diaspora, and how we created our culture here [in America] that has its roots in the Motherland. He was saying all that," Jamison explains.

"But [did he know] that this would end up being a 60-year institution? That his name would be heralded forever? I doubt it," she says. "Because when you're in the creative process you don't think that — you hope.

"He was trying to get the work done of telling the truth about who we were as human beings and creative people of great intelligence, and understanding that we needed to purvey that truth in the works that we did."

### The Community Matters

Ailey didn't just believe in taking his dancers on the road to perform at venues around the world, he wanted to touch those who couldn't make it to the theater as well.

"It was very important for us to connect to the communities that we served from the beginning, before they started talking about outreach. We were reaching out already," Jamison says.



"The whole mantra of Ailey is that we're not just dancing on stage. We go outside and give master classes, lectures and demonstrations, and workshops to people who might not get to the theater," she says.

### Thinking Globally

A year after Jamison joined the company, Ailey took the dance troupe to Africa for the World Festival of Black Arts, a month-long celebration in Dakar, Senegal.

"It was huge. Langston Hughes was there, and Duke Ellington, and Katherine Dunham, and everyone from the diaspora, and everybody from all over the continent," Jamison recalls. "So, I have all those memories, but it's how I can sit in the audience now and watch these extraordinary dancers continue his legacy."

The World Festival of Black Arts wasn't the only time Ailey hit the road. The company also traveled to Paris, Brazil, and in 1967, Ailey toured nine countries on the African continent in just two months. According to Jamison, the trip was a revelatory experience.

"When you grow up, as my generation did, and see all these Tarzan movies and all these pretend African things, and then you actually step off the plane and you smell it, sense it, and taste it, oh my God, is that a revelation!"



#### It's All About the Truth

For Ailey, according to Jamison, telling the truth was paramount. "Being direct and truthful about the black experience, and taking it around the world, says something to other people who are still crazy about this company 60 years later," she says.

"They're watching your truthfulness and who you are, and they connect to what you're doing as human beings," Jamison continues. "So that's why the company can go around the world and everybody understands what we're talking about. He's giving everyone the opportunity to see this predominantly black company and see them do all kinds of dance, influenced by all kinds of culture."

"When people see excellence and truthfulness in dance, and they see committed people on the stage who are trying to tell you something about who you are — because they already know who they are — it just works. And that's why I believe the company is so globally understood because Mr. Ailey was so specific about telling the truth about who we are as people," she says.

Jamison credits Ailey's commitment to the truth as one of the things that has helped the dance company remain relevant and popular for the past six decades.

"If you're telling the truth it'll last," she says. "If you are clear on your purpose, and who you are and what you have to give to this world — what you have to say about not dancing in a vacuum, but dancing for people. This is not an elitist art form. Dance is for people. Dance came from people and needs to be delivered back to people. Mr. Ailey always said that.

"If you get up there and do something phony, people will know it and word will go around. But word goes around brilliantly about Mr. Ailey because he was true to his art form, he was a genius of a choreographer, and he also embraced everyone else by being specific about who he was and who we are."

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater will conclude its North American tour this month, before beginning its Lincoln Center season in New York City in June.



# 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

RON REIF | 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 incomprehen-

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 New York Times

## The Passionate Humility of Solomon Dumas

By: Gia Kourlas

December 28, 2018

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Netflix's global ambitions for Turkish dramas.

BY ALEX MARSHALL



4 DANCE

Ascending from Alvin Ailey summer camp to the main stage. BY GIA KOURLAS

# The Passionate Humility of Solomon Dumas

This Alvin Ailey dancer, the first to go from AileyCamp to the main company, has had a breakout season with leading roles in two major premieres.

By GIA KOURLAS

A dancer isn't always born a dancer. Sometimes a mother has to step in.

Growing up on the South Side of Chicago with his single working mother, Solomon Dumas was involved in community theater and interested in the arts. But dance wasn't much of a presence in his life until his mother signed him up for AileyCamp, when he was 12.

"She made me go," Mr. Dumas said. "My mother kept me busy. There wasn't a lot of idle time. She kept me in programs."

AileyCamp turned out to be a good choice.

"After that camp, I was completely obsessed," he said. "We learned discipline through dance and we started each day with affirmations. I remember receiving a souvenir program book, and I had never seen so many beautiful people in my life. I said, Oh my gosh, they look like me. Or I want to look like them. There was this ele-



'He doesn't dance small and he doesn't apologize when he's dancing. It's like butter and fire at the same time.'

RONALD K. BROWN  
CHOREOGRAPHER

gance, this sophistication. And that was something that I needed to see at that time."

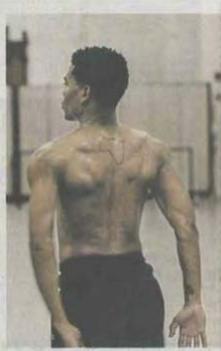
Mr. Dumas, nearing his third year in Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, is the only member to have started as an Ailey camper and gone on to join the main company. (AileyCamps — there were 10 in 2018 — are summer day camps for ages 11-14.) "I didn't realize I forced him," his mother, Beverly Rogers, said laughing. "It was just he went wherever I said to go. He never complained. He may have grunted a little bit, but I didn't pay that any attention."

Ms. Rogers can't say that she knew he was a dancer or an actor as a child, but recalled that before he could walk, whenever he heard music, he would bounce.

At 30, Mr. Dumas seems to have retained some of that bounce. Even when seated for an interview in the lounge at New York City Center — where the Ailey company's season continues through Sunday — his body



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JIBE EGGAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



was full of vibrations that extended to slender fingers drumming rhythms on a table or gesticulating into the air. It's an energy that has been radiating from the stage this season, a spectacular one for Mr. Dumas, who danced leading parts in new works by Ronald K. Brown ("The Call") and Rennie Harris ("Lazarus").

Created as part of the company's 60th anniversary, and each in its way a homage to Ailey, they are two of the most important and affecting dances of the year — not just at the Ailey company, but period. They're meaningful, even masterly additions to the repertory, giving the company something to sink its physical and emotional weight into. That came through in the dancing, which was full of reverence and urgency.

In both premieres, 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. Robert Battle, the company's artistic director, said he had been especially moved by Mr. Dumas this season. "I almost didn't recognize him in a good way," Mr. Battle said. "He's kind of a chameleon."

The circumstances under which Mr. Dumas performed the lead in "The Call" were stressful. The morning of its premiere was just an ordinary day when he noticed that Masazumi Chaya, the group's associate artistic director, was watching company class. That was odd enough, but stranger still was that Mr. Chaya was watching *him*.

It turned out that Jamar Roberts, scheduled to dance the lead, was injured, and Mr. Brown, the choreographer, wanted Mr. Du-

mas to take over. Mr. Dumas was panicked. He didn't know the steps; his focus had been on his part in the dance's trio.

"I had to basically learn it within an hour," Mr. Dumas said. "I was like, 'I'm not ready, I'm not ready.'" But Mr. Brown pulled him aside. "When he asked me, I couldn't say no," said Mr. Dumas, who used to be a member of Mr. Brown's company. "You don't say no to Ron."

The two first worked together when Mr. Dumas was a student at the Ailey school. After Mr. Dumas completed two years with Ailey II, the company's junior division, he joined Mr. Brown's troupe. "I just waited my turn," Mr. Brown said.

Mr. Dumas knows about waiting his turn: His path to the main company hasn't been a direct one. After his AileyCamp experience, he attended the Chicago Academy for the Arts as well as at the Russell Talbert Dance Studio, where he continued his training after school. There, his focus was ballet. "I was in the studio until about 9 p.m. every day, even sometimes on Sundays."

Before he trained at the Ailey school, he was a member of Garth Fagan Dance. After leaving Mr. Brown's company, he was weighing his options: He was an instructor at Barry's Bootcamp, and had started acting classes. But there was an Ailey audition and he decided to go. It was his fifth try, and there was only one male spot open.

"I always thought if I got into the company it would be during this mass exodus when there were maybe four spots," he said. "I never thought that I would be the one guy. Because I wasn't the tall guy. I wasn't the

leggy guy. I was never that dancer known for the tricks and the things you would associate Ailey with."

Yet for Mr. Brown, he has a kind of passionate humility. "He goes for broke, but not like he's trying to impress you — and not like he even knows," he said. "He takes over the stage and is still kind of unassuming. He doesn't dance small and he doesn't apologize when he's dancing. It's like butter and fire at the same time."

This season, Mr. Dumas said he was grateful to spend so much time in the studio with choreographers like Mr. Brown, Mr. Harris and Twyla Tharp, who worked with him closely on "The Golden Section" (1981). The day she arrived was a memorable one. "I open the piece and as soon as I went across the floor, she stopped the music," he said. "I said, Oh God, this is the most embarrassing thing. She came to me and said: 'Look at me. You're holding back.'"

He started over; she stopped the music again and told him again, more firmly, that he was holding back. "And then I did it" — he snapped his fingers — "I don't know what clicked in. She said, 'That's what I'm talking about.' She kind of broke me down."

Ms. Tharp worked with the company for a week and spent so much time with Mr. Dumas that Mr. Battle said he wondered, "Is she going to take him and leave with him?" She taught him about daring: The difference between simply performing a role and dancing like you're not afraid to fall down.

But while Mr. Dumas is enjoying such challenges, he said he's not one of those dancers who plans to stay in the company for 20 years. "Hell, no," he said, laughing. But "only because there are so many other things that I want to do dance-wise — and everything else."

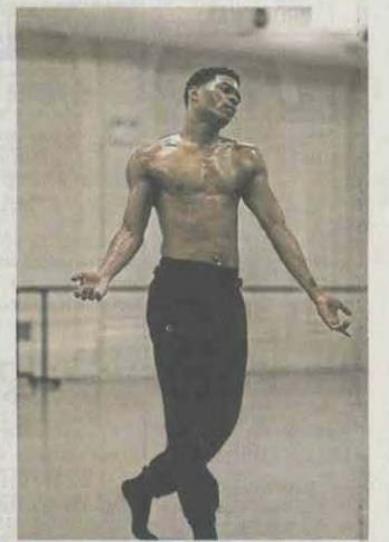
At the same time, he knows that, well, you never know. He said he was shocked when Mr. Battle hired him.

"I did have an emotional moment because I thought back to being an Ailey camper," he said of learning the news in Mr. Battle's office. "I still have his handkerchief. He told me that he liked my dancing and that he had no idea that I was coming. There were no preconceived ideas or notions — I wasn't on the radar. I just came in and he said, 'Wow — O.K., I'll go with him.' I'm so glad he took the chance."

Clockwise from top left, Solomon Dumas of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. He danced leading roles in Rennie Harris's "Lazarus" and Ronald K. Brown's "The Call" this season. Mr. Dumas, below, with Jacqueline Green in the premiere of "The Call."



ANDREA MOHIN/THE NEW YORK TIMES



# The Guardian

## Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater: Shelter review – moves with our times

By: Sanjoy Roy

August 21, 2020



Some dances seem timeless; Jawole Willa Jo Zollar's *Shelter* seems perennially timely. Created in 1988 in response to homelessness on the streets of New York, the piece was taken into the repertory of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1992. Zollar adapted it for her company performances in New Orleans, post-Katrina, and the Ailey company revived it again in 2017. Now showing in the online Ailey All Access season, it has become newly urgent during the coronavirus crisis.

Just 20 minutes long, it draws its power not from where it starts, but what it points to. Performed by six women (the company also perform an all-male version), it's a ragged, scrabbling work, driven by Junior Wedderburn's stuttering percussion and layered with spoken and sung texts that – like the bodies on stage – bring their own irregular rhythms. The opening scene, narrating the all-too-easy fall into homelessness, ends with a pivotal line: "It can happen to you, too."

The sound of blues and chants tap another history of homelessness: of Africans uprooted to become Americans. The women clump and scatter, tense as fugitives. Buffeted by contrary forces, they stride with determined kicks only to tumble headlong; vertical jumps – a combination of launch and crouch – seem to heave upwards and downwards at once. As a voice urges "keep walking, keep walking" it is impossible not to think of today's migration crisis, another flight from homelands.

Zollar offers some respite – a tender interlude in which the women become shelter for each other – but in the final section she turns the heat up again. "Hurricanes, earthquakes, droughts, fires, rain ... admit how we are destroying this place." Reprising one of the work's gestural motifs, a woman arcs one pointing finger out from the stage, and we know: it is happening to us, too.

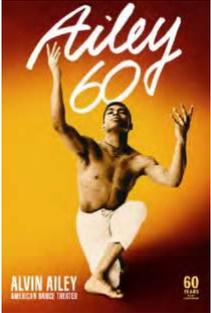
*Shelter* is available online until 27 August.



## Alvin Ailey 60<sup>th</sup> Year Celebration: Judith Jamison, Robert Battle and More Honor the Legacy of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

By: Janice Williams

December 4, 2018



When Alvin Ailey set out to start his own dance company in New York City in 1958, he likely had no idea his passion and call to dance would result in a nearly 85,000-square-foot performance center bearing his name and thousands of students entering its doors day after day, while company dancers traveled to perform his choreography on stages around the globe. He certainly couldn't have known his effort to create a safe and esteemed place for dancers from all walks of life would extend well past his 1989 death, some 30 years.

Yet, here we are now, 60 years after Ailey first launched the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and the performing arts theater as well as its educational component, The Ailey School, is still flourishing exceedingly. The Ailey center is honoring the life and blood memories of Ailey with its special "Ailey Ascending" 60th-anniversary celebration, including worldwide performances of Ailey's most revered choreography with the addition of new works created as a thank you to the mastermind behind the theater and school.

Newsweek talked to Judith Jamison, the Artistic Director Emerita who helmed the company from 1989 to 2011, her successor Robert Battle and a number of company dancers about the significance of Ailey's legacy. Read Newsweek's interview with a few members of the Ailey company below.

### Judith Jamison, Artistic Director Emerita

#### What does the 60th anniversary mean to you?

It means generations of dancers and audiences have been sharing the love of what Mr. Ailey created 60 years ago. It takes [the audience], the incredible dancers in the company, our school and Mr. Ailey's genius to get to where we are now. We're living on his afterburn, we're living on the life he left us. The 60th anniversary is about celebrating the African American cultural expression and experience in the modern dance tradition of our country and serving our communities, but it's also about the love of a man who was a creative genius, who loved people. Mr. Ailey loved people, all walks of life, and he wanted his dancers and his company to be so accessible to everyone. It wasn't elitist, it wasn't only for certain people. It was for everyone. He always said, "Dance came from the people and should be delivered back to the people." And it's true. So we're living on the seeds that he planted 60 years ago.

#### Do you think he expected the company to go on for this long?

I don't know if he ever thought it was gonna continue this long or that we loved him this much to continue operating. If he was here today, I know he'd be smiling from ear to ear. He'd be so proud of us, as I am proud of the company now and the magnificent job they're doing on tour around the world, teaching. Think of where we started. He started with eight dancers and one performance. Here we are 60 years later in the beautiful state of the art Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater with outreach programs, extension programs, BSA programs and kids coming to study with us. Parents are bringing them as early as age 2. The junior students, the senior students, the professional students—it just goes on and on and on. Ailey camps, all over. Ten camps! It started with just one in Kansas City. Mr. Ailey thought this up. We're living on his dreams. We celebrate him every time the company comes on stage and that curtain goes up. When that dance starts, we are celebrating Alvin Ailey and what he did for us.

### Robert Battle, Artistic Director since 2011

#### What does this 60th anniversary mean to you?

It means Mr. Ailey's legacy continues to thrive, not just survive. For a modern dance company, actually any arts organization, longevity can be very difficult. When you think about a company surviving the death of its founder, Alvin Ailey, to now me being only the third artistic director after Judith Jamison, for it to continue to grow, to have our own permanent home with all of this wonderful space in New York City, I think it serves as a time to look back and reflect on where the company started and where we are today. So it really is an opportunity to reflect and then to spring forward into the future.



CTRL + Click photo to watch Ailey dancers perform to Beyoncé's "Freedom"



**People always say how Mr. Ailey was passionate about giving other dancers the chance to showcase their choreography. You recently introduced a few new pieces into the repertoire for the 60-year celebration. Was that intentional?**

It's important because it's a part of the continuum. That sense of nurturing new voices, new dances, new choreographers, it is vital to this organization because that means we have a future. So nurturing choreographers, as much as it is a selfless act it's a selfish act in the sense of needing those voices so that we can continue. There is certainly something in the culture of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater that is very much about paying it forward. That, to me, is the lifeblood—certainly in the African American community—this idea of when you get over you reach back and you bring back as many people as you can. So beyond it being a programmatic thing, it really is a part of the heartbeat of this company because Alvin Ailey was so generous that way. That really is the foundation of this company.

**Constance Stamatiou, Company Dancer since 2007**

**What does this 60th anniversary mean to you?**

It's 60 years of keeping a man's vision alive, his legacy. It's inspiring. This was a small dream that he had and look how grand it's become! I wonder what he'd think about Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater now? Did he ever think his company would be this big, traveling all over the world and having so many outreach programs accessible for people everywhere of all ages? It's really special to be a part of.

**How does it feel to be a young woman so heavily involved in maintaining the history and everything Mr. Ailey set out to do when he first launched the school and theater 60 years ago?**

It's been quite the journey. I moved to New York from North Carolina to study at SUNY Purchase and I had a teacher there who taught at [Ailey's] summer program. She brought me to the summer program, and when I came here I was just in awe. I had never seen so many kids that looked like me, brown kids, in class. Growing up, I was usually the token girl in class. So I was awestruck about that and about the quality [in the way] the students were moving. There was so much passion, so much fire. It's just something about Mr. Ailey's choreography that touches everybody's soul. It draws you in. It's something you can relate to—how he always talks about "Revelations" being about his blood memories, growing up in the south in Rogers, Texas. Being a part of a company that celebrates all races and made a leeway for people of color to be involved in this art is truly extraordinary. I'm very grateful to be a part of.

**Courtney Celeste Spears, First-Year Company Dancer**

**How does it feel to be a part of such a rich dance legacy created by Mr. Ailey, a black man from Jim-Crow south?**

It's magical to walk on to a stage every day and being constantly reminded that there's so much more and you're a part of something that is so much larger than yourself. To walk into this space that's honoring 60 years of a legacy and tradition and honoring the mastermind, the genius behind all of it, is quite special. It's such a privilege and honor to be a part of something so grand.



**Why is it important to spread Mr. Ailey's legacy now in today's society?**

One of the most beautiful things about art and dance specifically is that it brings people together. It's something that unites people from all backgrounds, races, ethnicities, religion. It's timeless. One of the biggest things we're told all the time is that Mr. Ailey said, "Dance came to the people and should be given back to the people." We're in a time now where there's so much tension surrounding race and ethnicity and what you look like and political differences, but one of the beautiful things I think the Ailey company and Mr. Ailey has given us is timeless quality and energy that no matter where you're coming from in the world, no matter what language you speak, what political party you're with, your race—Ailey's work hits you at a core level, your soul. It's human.

It's so important to have places like this where people can feel united in what they're watching and the experience they're having when coming to see the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. It's so important for young brown girls and boys and Latino boys and girls and Asian girls and boys to see people that look like them on stage thriving and not being portrayed as anything other than the beautiful God-given creatures they are and to see their history being explored and executed in complete living motion on stage. It's also great to teach people about a history that they might not be familiar with, people who did not grow up understanding African American hymns, rituals and baptisms or what it meant to grow up in the south for someone like Mr. Ailey.

That's the history for some audience members and it's a full circle moment for them, but for some, I feel like Mr. Ailey's work shows them a completely different perspective of what the black body can do and the way we celebrate it.

**Solomon Dumas, Company Dancer since 2016**

**What does it mean to be a part of the company during this milestone achievement?**

It means everything to me. Being an African American man and being able to have this platform to share my passion and to know that this has lasted 60 years and it's still thriving and it's still valid, it's still current, I'm blessed and thankful. I'm full of gratitude that we're still able to tour. The organization is still growing. I'm thankful for the organization because it's given me an opportunity to travel the world. It's given me the opportunity to be educated and be an ambassador. I'm really proud to be a part of an organization that celebrates the African American heritage in the modern dance tradition. We use dance as our way of educating people. We travel the world, we travel the country and we share our black excellence. We're still doing the work to acknowledge our own presence and our contributions as African Americans and this organization has put so many people on the map. It's helped artists of color, dancers of colors, choreographers of color, lighting directors of color, costume designers of color, composers of color. Ailey company celebrates that heritage and has been doing so for 60 years.

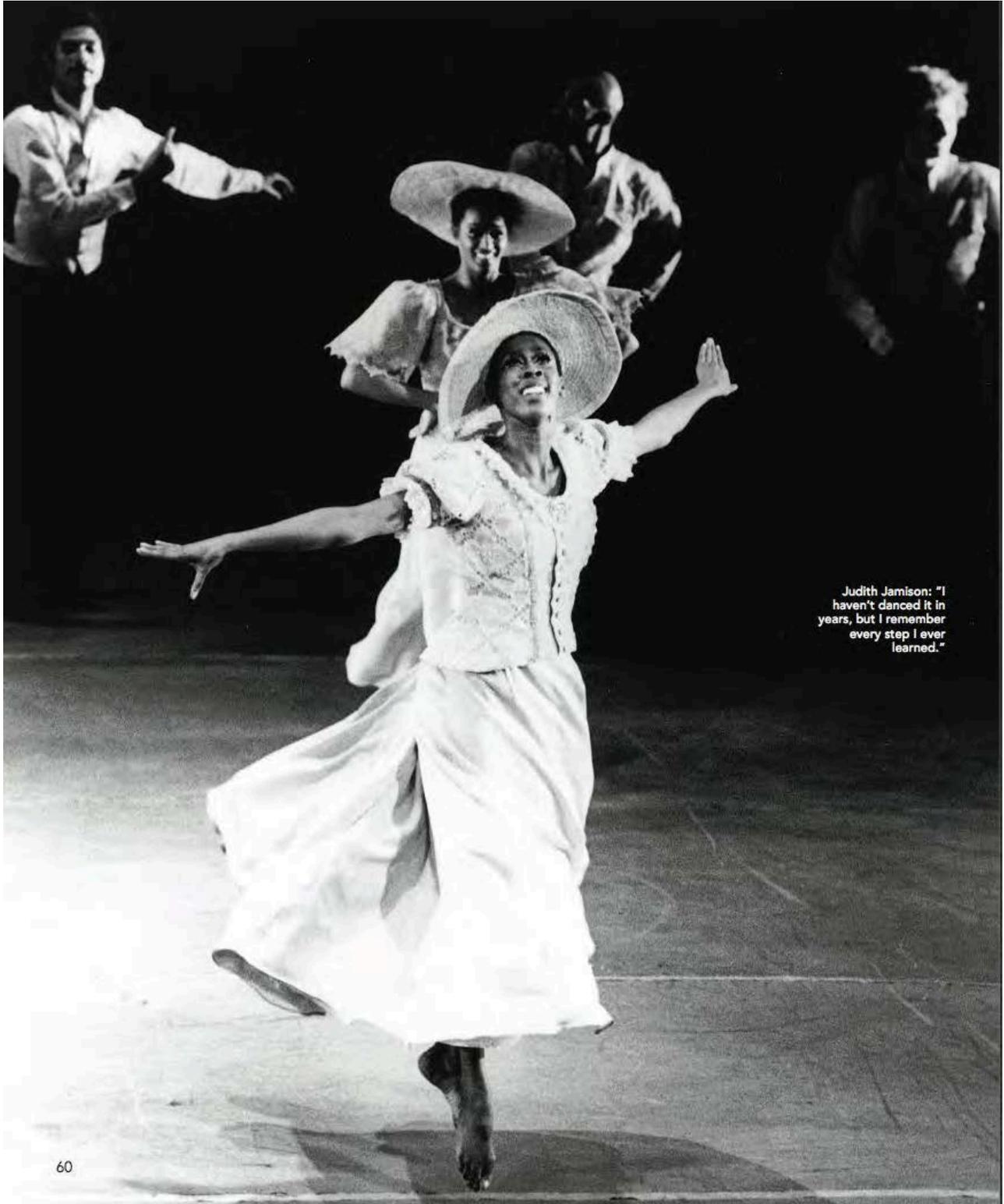
**What is the biggest thing you've learned from your experience with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater?**

The black experience is valid and it needs to be shared. Mr. Ailey created a piece called "Revelations" and it's one of the most famous works he's choreographed. It was choreographed in 1960, and it was a very prolific piece at that time and it still is. The thing about "Revelations" is it's based off his blood memories. His earlier character works are based off his blood memories of growing up in the segregated south, so it's his point of reference, his history. Of course, growing up in the segregated south at that time, the church was the hallmark of civilization for black people. He choreographed that piece based off his memories, but it shows our humanity, that we are human too and we experience joy and pain. It's a triumphant story nonetheless. No matter what you throw at us we tackle it, we persevere. And so that is the story that everybody can relate to. It's an unspoken communication and there's no denying this is a black piece that celebrates the black experience, but it's almost like a piece of history encapsulated. It's a period piece that shows you the African American story and how triumphant it is and how persevering it is and that transcends itself throughout the organization.

# DANCE<sup>®</sup>

magazine

December 2017 Issue

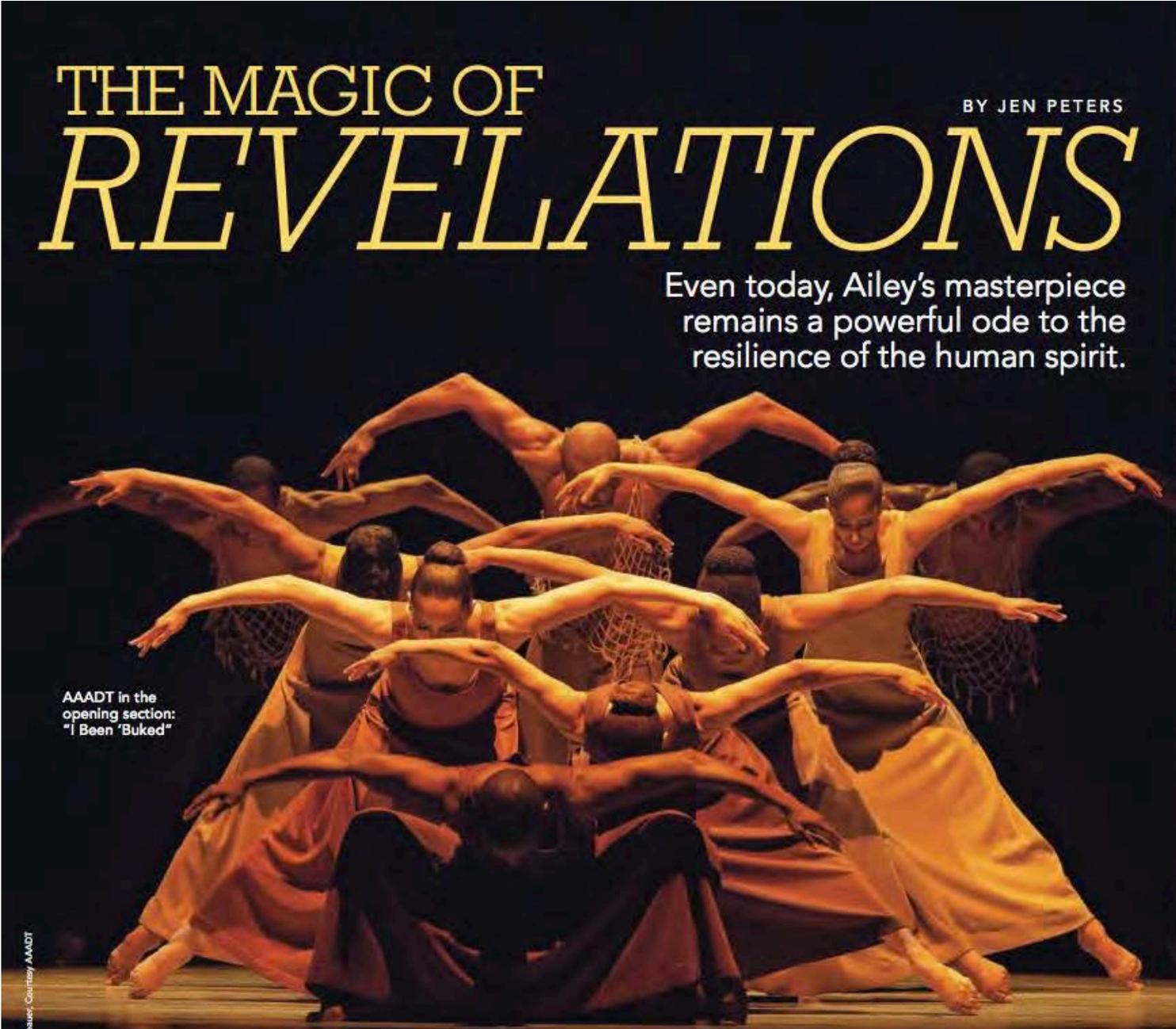


Judith Jamison: "I haven't danced it in years, but I remember every step I ever learned."

# 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"

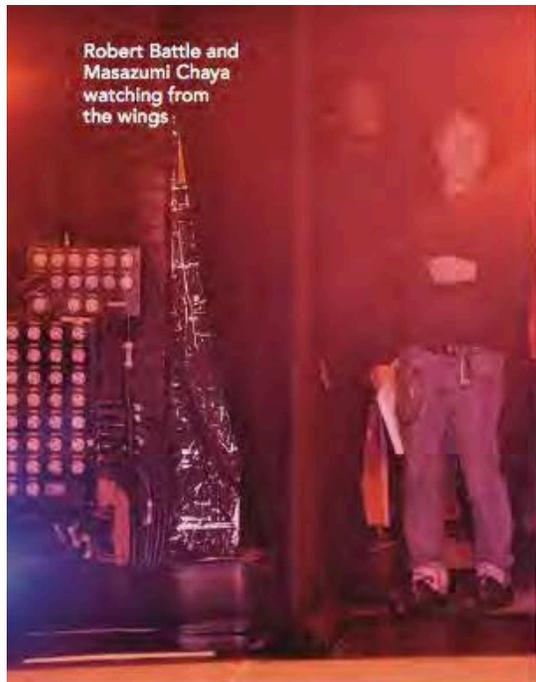
**In 1960, America was in the midst of a social transformation.** The Supreme Court had ruled "separate but equal" unconstitutional six years prior, but the country's response was slow and turbulent as desegregation incited violent responses. Surrounded by powerful civil rights momentum, a 29-year-old 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

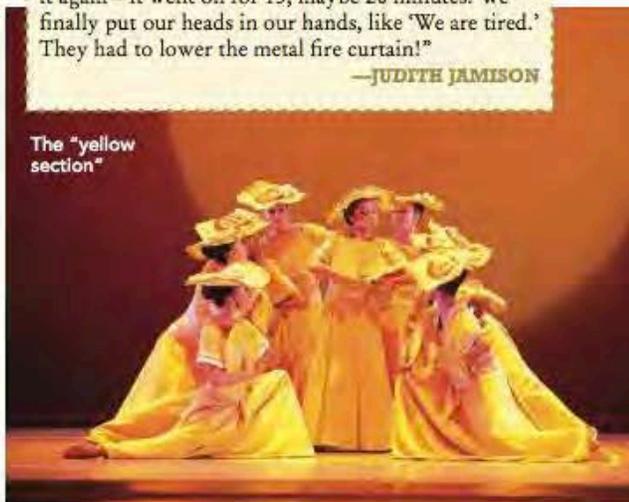
“When we used to perform with live music, I remember audience members bringing tambourines and playing along. They were ready like it was church!” —JUDITH JAMISON

“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

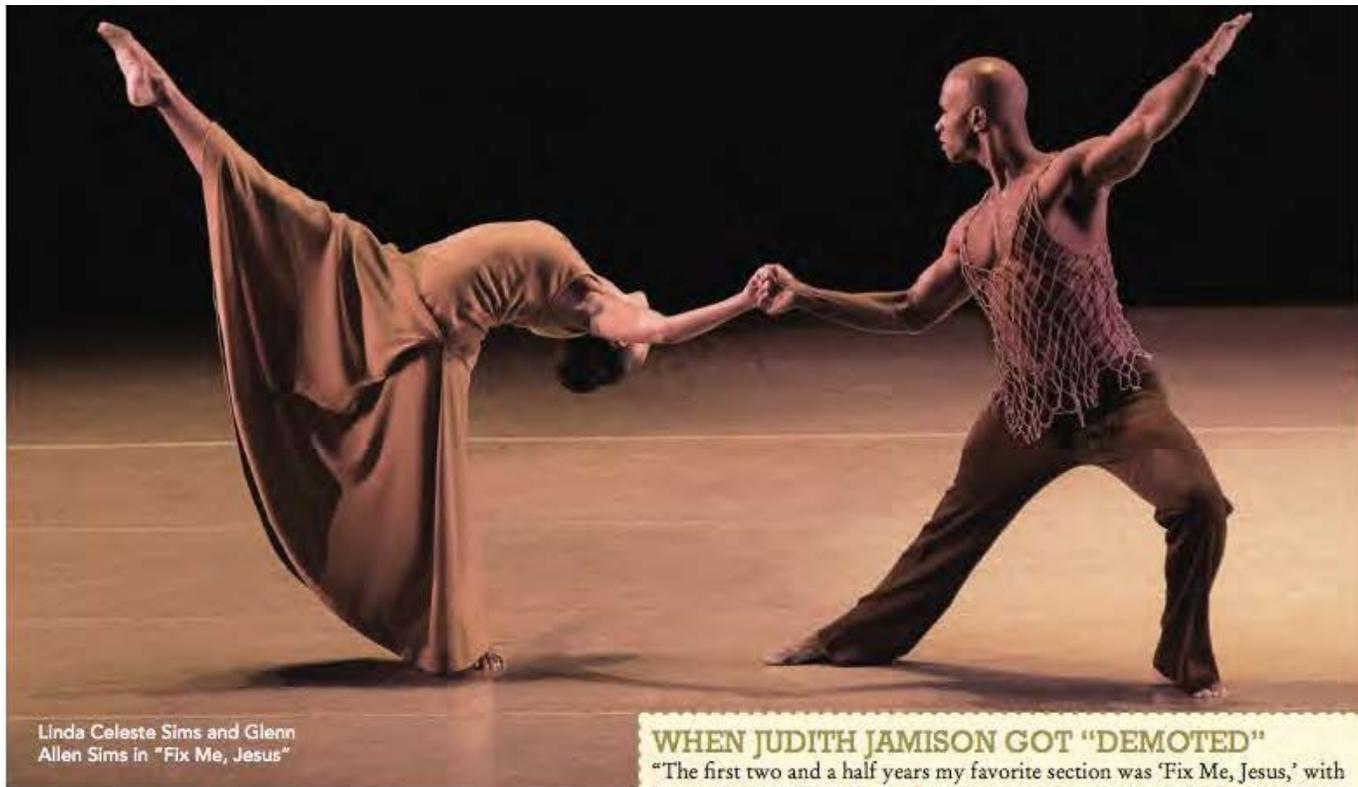
The “yellow section”



### 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"

### WHEN JUDITH JAMISON GOT "DEMOTED"

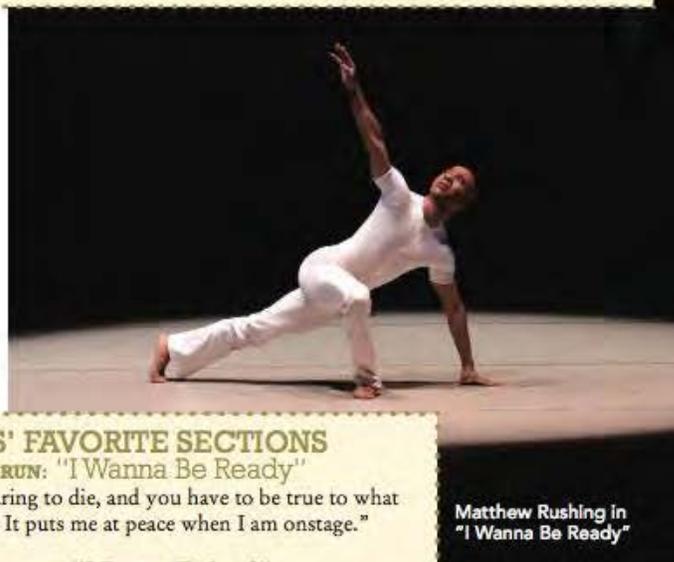
"The first two and a half years my favorite section was 'Fix Me, Jesus,' with Jimmy Truitte. Then Consuelo Atlas came along and was the first person to go past the T and into an arch, but I couldn't do that, so I got 'demoted' to carrying a prop...I was so mad! But I came out with that umbrella and a 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

### 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



Matthew Rushing in "I Wanna Be Ready"

### 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."

# The New York Times

October 10, 2017

## Ailey Dancer Honors His Roots

Jamar Roberts is loyal to his longtime Miami mentor.

By JORDAN LEVIN

MIAMI — Jamar Roberts has been around the world as a leading dancer with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. But a week after Hurricane Irma swept through Miami, he was back where he started, at Dance Empire, a studio in a suburban strip of warehouses here.

Life was mostly back to normal in Miami, with towering piles of debris lining the streets the chief remaining sign of the storm. Inside the studio, attention was focused on Mr. Roberts, who was rehearsing a group of young dancers in a piece that hinted at his difficult past. He demonstrated a sequence that veered between wild, flinging movement and tense, pulsing quiet.

"There's this feeling of loss," he said, his torso bucking. "You're losing ground."

From a corner, Angel Fraser-Logan, Empire's owner and artistic director, looked on approvingly.

"My favorite place is watching him create

CONTINUED ON PAGE C3



SCOTT HANSEN/REUTERS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Jamar Roberts of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater leading a rehearsal in Miami at Dance Empire, where he studied in his youth. He is working on a project in his hometown.



The couldn't control how he was spinning, couldn't stop. But it was more graceful, with more ability than I'd ever seen.

ANGEL FRASER-LOGAN  
OWNER AND ARTISTIC  
DIRECTOR OF DANCE  
EMPIRE IN MIAMI, ON A  
TECHNICAL JAMAR ROBERTS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE C1

on my dancers," she said.

Ms. Fraser-Logan, 42, has been watching Mr. Roberts, 35, for two decades. As a teacher and a mentor, she helped him surmount a troubled home life and grow from an introverted boy who barely spoke to a world-class dancer.

"She made me feel safe to express the things I wanted to express," Mr. Roberts said, "without feeling like they were wrong, that I was wrong for wanting to dance or choreograph."

In return, he became part of her family, godfather to her children and an inspiration to students at Empire, where he has returned regularly to teach and choreograph since he left Miami for Alley, in New York, in 2001.

Mr. Roberts, at 6-foot-4, towers over Ms. Fraser-Logan ("I'm 5 foot nothing"). And his reserved demeanor contrasts with her animated one. But they remain tightly bound, and are collaborating on an ambitious project highlighting Mr. Roberts's roots here, a program of his choreography called "The House of the Most Loved," scheduled to show at the Olympia Theater in downtown Miami in January.

Mr. Roberts spent a week in mid-September rehearsing with Empire students and will add other young dancers from the area later. He will travel from New York to work on the show, even as he prepares his first piece for the Alley troupe, "Members Don't Get Weary," set to have its premiere on Dec. 8 during the company's season at New York City Center.

After the Empire rehearsal, Mr. Roberts joined Ms. Fraser-Logan and her daughter Brooke, 23, at their house, where he stays when in Miami. They sat in the kitchen, eating leftovers, telling stories about his teenage appetite; his wariness of her dogs ("where I came from dogs bite you," he said); how he dressed up as a cartoon character for Carter, Ms. Fraser-Logan's 7-year-old son; and how he coaxed Brooke through adolescence. (She will be his choreographic assistant for the Alley piece in New York.)

Close as they are now, Mr. Roberts and Ms. Fraser-Logan come from different backgrounds. Mr. Roberts and his two brothers grew up in Goulds, a poor neighborhood he described as regularly torn by

gunfire and drug busts. His family moved often, living with relatives when they couldn't afford their own home. After Hurricane Andrew destroyed their house in 1992, he said his parents' drug use made his family's already chaotic home life untenable.

"We just got poorer and poorer," Mr. Roberts said. "Nights were really dark and heavy."

He found an escape in sixth grade, when he was transfixed by a dance performance at his school holiday show: girls in sparkly purple dresses whirling to a syrupy Disney tune.

"My whole world changed," he said, laughing. "They were spinning and twirling, and I was like, 'I have to do that.' I was just drawn to the beauty of it."

His life stabilized when he and his brothers moved in with his grandmother. He transferred to an arts-magnet middle school with a strong dance program. He borrowed classical music tapes so he could make up dances at home, and drew ballerinas to give to the program's director. But he said he remained so withdrawn that he rarely talked.

Ms. Fraser-Logan, by contrast, grew up in a middle-class family in Palmetto Bay. She trained at the New World School of the Arts, the Miami conservatory whose graduates include Robert Battle, artistic director of the Alley company. Instead of a career as a dancer, Ms. Fraser-Logan, who married at 20 and had children, turned to teaching. She was struck by Mr. Roberts, a towering ninth grader when she spotted him in the back of a modern dance class she taught at a local arts high school.

"He had a chipped front tooth and jumped so high he almost hit the ceiling," she said. Impressed, and thinking he might be an ideal scholarship student at her new studio, she offered to buy him a bus pass.

For his part, Mr. Roberts said he was mesmerized by the barefoot, uninhibited Ms. Fraser-Logan: "I had never seen a teacher like that, so expressive and open."

So he showed up at her studio. "He couldn't control how he was spinning, couldn't stop," she said. "But it was more graceful, with more ability than I'd ever seen."

After that first class she told him: "You don't need to take the bus. I'll drive you home."



Jamar Roberts, top, is balancing his career as a dancer and choreographer for the Alvin Alley company with teaching young artists in his hometown, at Dance Empire in Miami, above.

Ms. Fraser-Logan became an advocate for Mr. Roberts. Through high school, she drove him home at night, paid for competitions, got his tooth fixed and used his drawings for program covers. She took him to an Alley performance and told him, "That could be you." If he went to the New World school, Mr. Roberts's grandmother was opposed at first, distrustful of Mr. Roberts's growing involvement with a world that seemed alien to her.

"She was not having it," Mr. Roberts said. "She was like, 'Why do you have to go to those white people's school when you can just go to the school right here, Homestead Senior High, where the black kids are?' She had a lot of anxiety around raising these young boys when young boys here in Miami are so vulnerable."

Mr. Roberts said that his confidence grew with Ms. Fraser-Logan's attention. Their relationship was sealed when he unexpectedly

showed up at her home one morning. "He said, 'I don't know what to do with my life, I don't have a mom, I don't have someone who's going to be there for me,'" Ms. Fraser-Logan recalled. "Though not much older than he was, she promised to play that role for him."

The veteran New World teacher Peter London was also instrumental in making Mr. Roberts a strikingly powerful, eloquent dancer who has become central to the Alley troupe. (A recent review in *The New York Times* referred to his "gargantuan elegance" and "full-bodied commitment.")

But it was Ms. Fraser-Logan, Mr. Roberts said, who "taught me how to be an artist—the importance of dance being a form of expression and not just a physical act you do when music is on."

Now it's his turn to mentor the next generation. The group that Mr. Roberts rehearsed at Empire included the daughter of his middle-school dance director and a girl he is coaching who won a scholarship to the Alley school last summer.

"That freedom and openness and expression I was taught by Angel," Mr. Roberts said. "Once you tap into yourself that way, nothing else does it for you."

June 14, 2017

## An Ailey Favorite Returns to the Fold

Clifton Brown talks about working for other companies and how those stints have changed him for the better.

By MARTHA MARSH

Challenge, Clifton Brown is a fierce, a dancer with enormous presence, a strong theatricality and a large-statin, jazzi-physicality. His long, graceful arms seem to embrace the world, and he has a way of tilting his face upward so it catches the light, giving him the air of someone illuminated by thought.

These qualities establish a favorite of Ailey: Ailey American Dance Theater, which he joined in 1999 at 19, and left in 2011.

"Ailey is kind of an island," he explained in a recent interview, "and I'd never had the opportunity to see what the outside world was like." He went on to discuss the modern-dance choreographer Lar Lubovitch, and then, more hesitantly, for Jessica Lang, a contemporary choreographer who was in the process of putting together an ensemble. He signed with Ms. Lang for six years, becoming her rehearsal director.

But how was returning to the Ailey fold? A campaign was run at the company's studios; he had been back only two weeks and was preparing for the troupe's Lincoln Center run, which opens on Wednesday. He looked focused, and a little tired.

At Lincoln Center, he'll be causing back into old roles in Ailey's signature work, "Revelations"; the previous solo "I Wanna Be Ready"; the high-energy trio "Sinner Man"; and the proprietary duet "Six Men, Ju-

sus." Then, during the company's opening tour, he'll take on more rigorous, including Choreographer Weisgold's pas de deux "After the Rain."

In conversation, Mr. Brown is as calm, patient and unresponsive as he is imposing on the stage. These are quiet, electric tones from our discussion.

**Is "Revelations" still in your wheel?**

I don't think I could forget it even if I wanted to. In a way, it's like riding a bike, but I have a new perspective on it as well. You realize a lot of things you thought were so important are really not so important.

**Like what?**

Like in "I Wanna Be Ready," the way it looks, the picture, is important, but it's also a message to me and, each time you rise up a little bit further, and each time there is a giving up or a defeat. You have to find out how to get there, to have an internal reason. I have a little more insight into the reasons behind it because I've had time to think about the architecture of it.

**How did the time away change you as a dancer?**

I feel that I have more understanding of the importance of the work from the side of the choreographers. Being a dancer in a rep company, you're always trying to do your best on each program, but it's hard to get the specific location for each piece and such eyes. But I feel like I have a different kind of approach now.

**What drew you to dance for Jessica Lang?**

Her movement style changes from piece to



Clifton Brown in the Ailey fold.

Clifton Brown rehearsing. "I have a different kind of approach now," he said.

piece, which is great, especially for a choreographer whose work you're doing all the time. And her movement feels good; it's beautiful, but it's strange. It has intricacy combined with rhythm. And from the outside, it's stunning to look at.

**How about Mr. Lubovitch — what do you like about his style?**

His movement is so organic and so fluid; I actually feel like that's close to my natural movement quality in general. In working with Ailey, I learned to have more attack and more electricity.

**Why did you decide to return to Ailey now?**

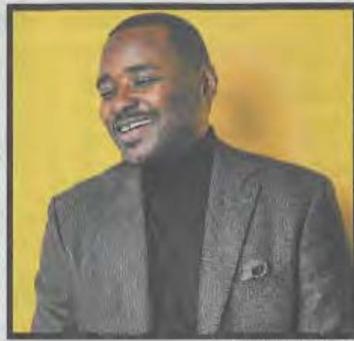
When I left Ailey, I was hoping to explore some other things, but not leave forever. So this just felt like the right time to do it. I wanted to see what it's like, with largely a different group of dancers and a new director [Robert Battle], now that the company is taking this slightly different direction. It's kind of a familiar, but also a new, experience.

**So, what's it like to dance "Sinner Man" at 37?**

[Laughs.] It's a great quick-wit, inside workout. It's being that out of a cannon. It takes satisfaction. You have to be ready. It's about conquering up the feeling of Judgment Day, so you've got to win. And then at the end, you're just really out of breath.

# Arts & Leisure

The New York Times



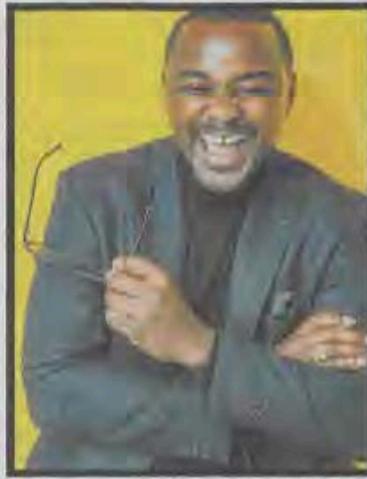
TORY CERCO/AT THE NEW YORK TIMES

## 'Putting Them On, I Had the Keys'

Growing up poor, Robert Battle had to rely on his imagination to envision a life in the arts. Then he got his first real, and cherished, pair of dance shoes. Now he's the artistic director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Page 8.

### THE FIRST TIME . . .

# . . . I Had Real Dance Shoes



PHOTOGRAPHS BY TORY CERCO/AT THE NEW YORK TIMES

By ROBERT BATTLE

I'll never forget the impact of my first dance shoes.

We didn't have a lot of money, especially when I was in elementary school. So I got "imitation" shoes; they weren't Converse — they were "con-whatever." Kids would pick on you because you didn't have trendy name-brand shoes and that was a source of anxiety to me.

But when I was 12 my mother took me to the Star Styled store in Miami to buy me genuine name-brand tap shoes, ballet slippers and jazz oxfords. She made it a priority, as I had to have all of these types of shoes before my first classes started.

It was such a big deal when I got those shoes that I would even sleep with them. Just by putting them on, I had the keys to what I was hoping to become. In the back room of our house, I would imitate photographs of dancers from the magazines my teacher had given me. All of a sudden, I was connected to a magical world. The power of those shoes as something tangible, and as a metaphor, was enormous for me.

Anything I learned, I would try to teach to the neighborhood kids. Soon I would cast

them in dance videos with my front porch as the stage. I choreographed to the song "Word Up!" by Cameo, and persuaded a group of my fellow students to participate, including football players. We performed the routine for no one, because we were all in it. But it sparked my desire to create dance, not just to perform it.

Growing up in the Liberty City neighborhood of Miami had its rough edges. Two blocks away, there were drug deals and shootings, which I saw walking to and from school. Pretty much everyone I knew had security bars on their windows. I would use the ones on the inside of my front porch as a ballet barre. It was a challenge being a kid who played classical piano, danced and sang soprano in the choir. Sometimes I was threatened, so I started carrying a hammer in my dance bag for protection. I carried myself differently, and people left me alone.

The first time I saw Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, classes from our school were bused to a special performance for students at Jackie Gleason Theater in Miami Beach. The dancers were in some ways a reflection of me; they looked like me, but more than that they looked like what I wanted to become.

*"It costs you nothing to use your imagination, but it will cost you everything if you don't use it."*

The highlight of the performance was "Revelations," Ailey's masterpiece, created in 1960 at the cusp of the civil rights movement. It's not just a dance, but a suite of spirituals relating to the black experience in this country and expressing the trials, tribulations, faith and hope to which everyone can relate. As a boy who grew up in the church, I felt connected to it in a very personal way. One section that really resonated with me was "Wade in the Water," a depiction of a baptism. Across the stage, fabric billowed, representing the water, and dancers stepped forward and back with equal parts fear and joy.

That's what I felt being baptized in my own church. "Revelations" was my story as much as it was Ailey's blood memories. It felt very much like the life I already knew. So I could walk into a positive image that was much more powerful than all of the negatives I had ever seen, combined.

### ROBERT BATTLE

This dancer and choreographer is artistic director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, whose new season at City Center starts Nov. 30.

Images were important to me. I would cut out pictures from dance magazines — Anna Pavlova, Judith Jamison — and paste them on big square pieces of wood. In my dark room at night I would slowly shine a flashlight over them, intrigued by the contrast, which is in some ways a metaphor for life. Even in a dark space, a dark time, with your imagination and your ability to see beyond your circumstance, there is always light. That vision board was a powerful exercise for me. But (ermits eventually got to the wood, and I had to throw it away).

My imagination was my passport to the world. We had a lot of trees in the yard in Florida, but the mango tree was the biggest, with a place that I could perch. There was something about being high above the ground that elevated me beyond place, time and circumstance. I would envision what it would be like to perform in front of thousands in New York City and walk through Times Square. I would envision the audience's faces, what they were wearing, even how they got to the theater. I felt the same adrenaline rush as if I were actually performing. I'm convinced that exercise moved me closer to my destiny.

Eventually I auditioned for Juilliard and was fortunate to be accepted on full scholarship. There I was, in New York, just a few blocks away from the Ailey company, which at the time was on West 61st Street. Visiting the studios, I could peer through the windows, catch the occasional sighting of the legendary Judith Jamison, who was then artistic director. Years later, when she grabbed my hands, looked into my eyes and asked me to lead the company — "It's yours," she said — everything that I visualized while studying those images of her came flooding back.

Even to this day, when someone says, "Please welcome the artistic director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Robert Battle," there's something in me that is reduced to that young person in the mango tree. I always tell young people, "It costs you nothing to use your imagination, but it will cost you everything if you don't use it." When I think back to that moment of putting on my first dance shoes, I know now that it was about unlocking the mystery of my imagination. Putting on those shoes allowed me to walk into this magnificent world of dance, and, step after step, it continues to be life-changing.

MONDAY, JULY 4, 2011

# Ailey dancers charm Moscow

New artistic director takes over with message rooted in civil rights movement

BY KATHY LALLY

MOSCOW — Robert Battle smiled at the incongruity, sitting in the high-noon darkness of a subterranean cafe in Moscow and slipping on the weighty mantle once worn by Alvin Ailey and then by Judith Jamison as artistic director of a much-celebrated American modern dance company.

Battle, a 38-year-old choreographer and former dancer, was made artistic director designate more than a year ago and took over his new role Friday, while the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater was on tour in Moscow.



Robert Battle

The venue — the troupe's home is in New York, about 4,700 miles and another culture away — was as curious as it was resonant. Alvin Ailey, a black man born into the deeply racist U.S. society of 1931, created his company because, as he once said, "I'm trying to say something about the beauty of black people, about the elegance ... and about their intelligence."

Ailey died in 1989, but his company delivered his message, eloquent and relevant as ever, to full houses in six performances at the storied Stani slavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Musical Theater.

This visit to Russia, with performances in St. Petersburg last Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, was sponsored by the U.S. State Department and others as part of President Obama's effort to engage Russia and warm up a relationship that had been cooling. It began a year-long "American Seasons" that will include an Annie Leibovitz photography exhibit and, in April, performances by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Detractors say that reset policy has meant giving Russia a pass on the arbitrary ways it often treats its citizens. If so, the Ailey performances are a reminder that cultural statements can be as powerful as the political, even if more subtle.

## In Moscow, the gospel of Ailey

AILEY FROM CI

Ailey started the company in 1958, the year high schools in Little Rock, Ark., were closed to prevent integration and 10,000 students marched on Washington in support of integrated schools.

Although Russia's laws are not discriminatory in the manner of American Jim Crow legislation, they are arbitrarily applied, and many people here hold a deep-rooted prejudice against their fellow citizens from the Caucasian mountain regions of the country such as Chechnya and Dagestan. The ethnic groups there tend to have dark hair and be olive-skinned. Russians call them black; they are frequently demeaned and their rights violated.

Toward the end of June, a soccer fan in a mid-size city threw a banana onto the field to taunt Roberto Carlos, a Brazilian who plays for the Dagestan team. A similar incident occurred earlier this year in St. Petersburg.

The racism seems particularly virulent in the sporting world. In December, Moscow soccer fans got into a street brawl with young men from the Caucasus. In the melee, an ethnic Russian was killed, and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin laid a wreath at the spot, a gesture interpreted as taking sides before the facts were known. Days of ethnic tension ensued.

IN STEP: Dancers Linda Celeste Sims, left, Alicia Graf Mack and Glenn Allen Sims in "Revelations." The Moscow performance was sponsored in part by the State Department.



ALVIN AILEY

Racial profiling is so routine that on a short subway trip to the theater last week, police could be observed several times stopping Caucasian-featured young men and women, demanding to see their identification papers.

The Ailey performances offered Russians a different stage to engage with people of color. This is the home of classical ballet, and the audiences were both knowledgeable and appreciative. In the conversation with mostly Russian journalists — only one American reporter was present — Battle was pelted with admiring and well-informed questions.

"One thing Judith Jamison always does is to remind us that Mr. Ailey started the company during the civil rights movement," he said, answering a question about his sense of Ailey's original vision. "This was more than a dance company. It was a movement, and we feel connected to it."

The tradition, and the movement, he said, have been passed physically, from person to person, from place to place, in a company that now includes two Marylanders, Alicia Graf Mack from Columbia and Jacqueline Green from Baltimore.

"Here I am in a basement in Russia, talking to journalists and picking up the baton," Battle said with an easy

smile. "I'm both grateful and inspired."

That evening's performance — similar to a February program in Washington — began with "Anointed," a ballet by Christopher Huggins describing Ailey turning the company over to Jamison, and now Jamison conveying it to Battle.

It concluded with "Revelations," said to be the most-performed work of modern dance ever.

During an intermission before she danced in "Revelations," Mack, who just rejoined the company, said the Russian audiences had been present and responsive.

"I tap into my deepest spiritual self on the stage," she said. "For me to be part of a company that celebrates humanity in such a beautiful way helps me be my best self."

On the stage, Mack said, she fully and deeply lived her life.

Soon, she and the others were soaring body and soul to the gospel music that has captivated so many audiences — "Wade in the Water," "Sinner Man" and "Rocka My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham."

The performance was powerful, the dancers beautiful, elegant and intelligent, and the Russian audience felt it, clapping and clapping and clapping again.

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