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# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

AILEY II | THE AILEY SCHOOL | AILEY ARTS IN EDUCATION & COMMUNITY PROGRAMS | AILEY EXTENSION  
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Robert Battle, Artistic Director Matthew Rushing, Associate Artistic Director Bennett Rink, Executive Director  
Alvin Ailey, Founder Judith Jamison, Artistic Director Emerita

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## ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER PRESENTS *AILEY FORWARD* – FIRST-EVER VIRTUAL SEASON CELEBRATING SIX DECADES OF *REVELATIONS* DECEMBER 2 – 31, 2020

**“Revelations Reimagined” Opening Night Virtual Benefit on Wednesday, December 2**

**Month-Long Season Features World Premiere of *Testament* by Associate Artistic Director Matthew Rushing, Company Member and Assistant to the Rehearsal Director Clifton Brown, and Former Company Member Yusha-Marie Sorzano**  
**Ailey Resident Choreographer Jamar Roberts Creates *A Jam Session for Troubling Times* as Part of the Centennial of Jazz Revolutionary Charlie “Bird” Parker**

**Special Programs Extending Throughout Holidays Include *Ailey & Ellington*, Celebrating Glenn Allen Sims and Linda Celeste Sims, Family Programs and Series of *BattleTalk* Conversations**

**New York – November 10, 2020 –** This holiday season, [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater](#) will continue a tradition of uplifting and uniting audiences across the globe with a free virtual engagement celebrating six decades of [Revelations](#), thanks to the generous support of **Bank of America**. Nine special presentations extending from December 2 – 31 will each be available online for a one-week period and open to all. Ailey’s extraordinary dancers will elevate a legacy of innovation and excellence in artistry with a reimagined season featuring premieres by Ailey’s Resident Choreographer [Jamar Roberts](#); and Associate Artistic Director [Matthew Rushing](#), in partnership with Company member and Assistant to the Rehearsal Director [Clifton Brown](#), and former Company member Yusha-Marie Sorzano; a variety of other distinct programs; and a series of **BattleTalk** conversations, moderated by Artistic Director [Robert Battle](#).

“Despite adversity, Ailey’s holiday tradition will move forward this December with virtual performances sharing characteristic warmth, spirit and artistry,” stated **Artistic Director Robert Battle**. “Offered as a source of inspiration and unity, Ailey’s groundbreaking season will share special programs celebrating six decades of *Revelations*, reinvent classic works by our beloved founder, and honor Glenn Allen Sims and Linda Celeste Sims, whose long and illustrious career exemplifies why the Ailey dancers are so applauded. I’m also thrilled to premiere choreography by members of the Ailey family, including Associate Artistic Director Matthew Rushing and Resident Choreographer Jamar Roberts, and share a series of topical conversations with some incredible people who I admire.”

“Bank of America is pleased to support Ailey in its efforts to deliver virtual content and to keep the company thriving during this difficult time. Our arts support has remained steadfast as many of our partners postpone or cancel programming, converting our funding for operational relief purposes. Perhaps more than ever, Ailey is in a position to convey that people of all backgrounds can come together and create something beautiful and harmonious. They are a tremendous example of how the arts can enrich and educate societies, and we are proud to have been their partner for nine years now,” said **Rena DeSisto, Global Arts & Culture Executive for Bank of America**.

The virtual season **kicks off with “Revelations Reimagined” Opening Night Virtual Benefit on Wednesday, December 2 at 7:30pm ET** featuring excerpts filmed at [Wave Hill Public Garden & Cultural Center](#), a spectacular jewel overlooking the Hudson River, to celebrate the global impact of the soul-stirring American masterpiece that is needed more than ever during these trying times. Springing from Ailey’s childhood memories of growing up in the south during the depression and attending services at Mount Olive Baptist Church in Texas, *Revelations* pays homage to the rich cultural heritage of the African-American on a journey from struggle to surrender to salvation that ultimately speaks to our common humanity and the power of faith and hope. This free event will be streamed on various digital platforms and will include a spectacular virtual performance featuring Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and other special guests, followed by a post-benefit dance party. It will surely be a night to remember — one of celebration, dance, and love shared with people around the world.

**A Family Program: Revelations on Saturday, December 19 at 2:00pm ET** will make it a family affair while engaging the next generation as they explore and connect to *Revelations*, acclaimed as a must see for all. Clear a space in your home, wear comfortable clothing and get ready to join other dance enthusiasts in learning excerpts of “Wade in the Water” and “Rocka My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham” from Mr. Ailey’s most beloved work, *Revelations*. Alvin Ailey once said that, “The most unique thing in the world is you. If you can take these steps and show us yourself through it, that will be an extraordinary experience.” Inspired by his words, there will also be an activity inspired by the word unique. All ages and experience levels are welcome to enjoy. Along with the workshop, participants are also invited to be moved by an Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performance of *Revelations*.

Alvin Ailey’s uplifting “blood memories” are also the inspiration for a world premiere on **Thursday, December 17 at 7:30pm ET** that is shaped by the voices of those who know it so well – the artists who have danced it. Weaving together deep personal experiences, reflections from current dancers, cinematography by former Ailey/Fordham BFA student **Preston Miller**, and an original score by composer **Damien Sneed, Matthew Rushing**, in his first season as Associate Artistic Director, will join with Company member and Assistant to the Rehearsal Director **Clifton Brown** and former Company member **Yusha-Marie Sorzano** to present *Testament* – a tribute to Alvin Ailey’s *Revelations* that follows a community of people turning pain into power and lament into hope. With world-class gardens and stunning views, Wave Hill’s vibrant landscape sets the background for *Testament*. Founded in 1965, **Wave Hill** has a long legacy of engagement with the community, celebrating the artistry and legacy of its gardens and landscapes to preserve its magnificent views, and to explore human connections to the natural world through programs in horticulture, education and the arts. In conjunction with the performance, all three choreographers will join together for a discussion about creating this special tribute to a great American dance masterpiece.

In partnership with EHE Health, the season of celebration was launched by inviting the world to join in the dance with a **free *Revelations Celebration* interactive workshop led by Ailey Arts-In-Education Master Teacher [Nasha Thomas](#)** currently available on [EHE Health's Facebook page](#). Ailey is also excited to provide viewers with the opportunity to watch a full-length presentation of *Revelations* from the 2015 film of an Ailey at Lincoln Center performance [here](#).

**On Wednesday, December 23 at 7:30pm ET, a *Decades of Revelations* retrospective program will culminate the holiday season celebration** featuring highlights from *Revelations* over the last 60 years on film and video -- some of which haven't been seen publicly in decades.

**A Family Program: *Ailey & Ellington* on Saturday, December 5 at 2:00pm ET** will showcase three of the 14 ballets founder Alvin Ailey created during his career that celebrate the musical genius of the eminent American composer Duke Ellington that have become cherished Ailey standards - [Night Creature](#), [Reflections in D](#) and [Pas de Duke](#). Ailey's artistry will be reaching new heights in the breathtaking excerpt of *Pas de Duke*, originally created for Judith Jamison and Mikhail Baryshnikov, filmed at the newly transformed [Woolworth Tower Residences](#) on top of the iconic national and New York City landmark Woolworth building with the New York skyline as a backdrop. A visually striking location for the celebration of America's two great art forms - modern dance and jazz music – **The Woolworth Building** is an architectural gem that was officially inaugurated on April 24, 1913, when President Woodrow Wilson flipped a switch in the White House to illuminate what was then the world's tallest structure. The program will include ***BattleTalk with Wynton Marsalis***, artistic director of Jazz at Lincoln Center and world-renowned trumpeter and composer. In addition, a film will debut of ***Reflections in D*** performed by [Vernard Gilmore](#), a Company member for over two decades.

As part of the Ailey & Ellington program, Ailey Extension will present students taking to the streets of New York to perform *Night Creature*, a perfect fusion of Ailey's buoyant choreography and Duke Ellington's sparkling music featuring a world populated by jazz babies and night owls. Duke Ellington said that "night creatures, unlike stars, do not come OUT at night– they come ON, each thinking that, before the night is out, he or she will be the star." The program will also include a look at the students learning the choreography and reminiscences from renowned dancer and Extension instructor, Sarita Allen, one of the dancers from the original cast of *Night Creature* who was chosen by Alvin Ailey to perform the lead role.

**On Monday, December 7 at 7:30pm ET, a *Dancing Spirit* program** will examine the influence of spirituals, which were at the root of Alvin Ailey's presentation of his African American heritage. According to Alvin Ailey, "*Revelations* began with the music. Sunday was always a churchgoing day. There we would absorb some of the most glorious singing to be heard anywhere in the world. With profound feeling, with faith, hope, joy and sometimes sadness, the choirs, congregations, deacons, preachers and ushers would sing black spirituals and gospel songs. They sang and played the music with such fervor that even as a small child I could not only hear it but almost see it." Award-winning dancer and choreographer **Hope Boykin**, who took her final bow this year after two decades with Ailey, will be featured in an Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performance excerpt of "**This Little Light of Mine**" from [ODETTA \(2014\)](#), **Matthew Rushing's** tribute to **Odetta Holmes** – one of the most influential singers of the 20th century known as the "voice of the Civil Rights Movement." **Two Professional Division students from [The Ailey School](#)** will also perform a special new duet choreographed by Freddie Moore, the Student Performance Group Rehearsal Director, set to "Hallelu" by Toshi Reagon.

In conjunction with the *Dancing Spirit* program, a **BattleTalk with Reverend Dr. Eboni Marshall Turman and versatile singer-songwriter-guitarist Toshi Reagon** will delve deeper into the origins and significance of spirituals. Described by *Vibe* magazine as “one helluva rock’n’roller-coaster ride” and by *Pop Matters* as “a treasure waiting to be found,” Toshi Reagon is a one-woman celebration of all that’s dynamic, progressive and uplifting in American music. An author, ordained minister, professor, and public theologian, the Reverend Dr. Marshall Turman is a refreshing addition to our most pressing national discussions of faith, race and gender.

**On Wednesday, December 9 at 7:30pm ET, a program Celebrating [Glenn Allen Sims](#) and [Linda Celeste Sims](#)** will pay tribute to the artistry and bid a heartfelt farewell to beloved Company members after nearly 25 years. Hailed for their star power, longevity, and onstage partnership, Glenn and Linda are the longest tenured dancers in the Company, have toured as a married couple for more than 15 years and been guest stars around the world. Ailey’s talented husband-and-wife duo will premiere a new recording of the central duet from [The Winter in Lisbon](#). In addition, the program will also highlight an assortment of excerpts of the couple performing [Night Creature](#), [Polish Pieces](#), and “Fix Me, Jesus” from *Revelations*, as well as Linda in a solo from [Memoria](#). Also, revered choreographer **Ronald K. Brown will talk with Linda and Glenn** about their personal stories and professional journey that has touched Ailey audiences for decades.

Since its founding, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has used dance as a vehicle to provoke conversation and change. On **Friday, December 11 at 7:30pm ET, *Dancing for Social Justice*** will showcase performance excerpts from Jawole Willa Jo Zollar’s powerful ballet [Shelter](#), a passionate statement about the physical and emotional deprivation of homeless people and Kyle Abraham’s [Untitled America](#), a work that shines a light on the impact of the prison system on African-American families and features interviews by those impacted by incarceration. Fittingly, a timely discussion centered around the arts and social justice will be shared through **BattleTalk with Kyle Abraham, Jawole Willa Jo Zollar and activist and [Equal Justice Initiative](#) founder Bryan Stevenson.**

**Acclaimed Ailey dancer and Resident Choreographer Jamar Roberts’ *A Jam Session for Troubling Times* will be unveiled Monday, December 14 at 7:30pm ET**, inspired by saxophonist and composer Charlie “Bird” Parker as part of the [Bird100](#) centennial celebration. Alvin Ailey is famous for having said that “dance came from the people, and it should always be delivered back to the people.” In this upbeat, quirky, and accessible work filmed by **Emily Kikta and Peter Walker**, Jamar Roberts holds fast to that mission. At a time in our world rife with chaos and uncertainty, *A Jam Session for Troubling Times* uses the energy, nuance, and virtuosity of the ‘bebop’ sound as a vehicle to lift our spirits and demonstrate that we are stronger than our circumstances. Jazz has provided the soundtrack to his other works for the Company, including [Members Don’t Get Weary](#) (2017) and [Ode](#), last year’s powerful meditation on the beauty and delicacy of life in a time of growing gun violence. Ahead of the premiere, viewers can enjoy a **BattleTalk with Jamar Roberts.**

For further updates on the virtual season and schedule of special programs spanning the month of December (subject to change), visit [www.alvinailey.org/virtalseason](http://www.alvinailey.org/virtalseason).

Since the shutdown in March, Ailey reinvented the way it reaches audiences through [Ailey All Access](#), an online initiative that has reached over 30 million in 121 countries with the streaming of free performances from the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater repertory, classes, conversations and original short films created by the Ailey dancers “[separate but together](#)” from wherever they were. During these unprecedented times, the Ailey organization is grateful for contributions to the [Still, We Dance](#) campaign that is making it possible to move forward and share a free first-ever virtual season paying tribute to six decades of *Revelations*.

In 1958, Alvin Ailey and a small group of dancers took the stage in New York and forever changed American dance and culture. One of the country’s groundbreaking greats, his Company inspires all in a universal celebration of the human spirit using the African-American cultural experience and the modern dance tradition. More than 60 year after its founding, Ailey continues to break new ground under the leadership of Robert Battle, revealing time and again why Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is one of the world’s most beloved dance companies.

## **Bank of America is the *Revelations* at 60 Sponsor during Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater’s 2020 virtual season.**

**The 2020 virtual season is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.**



(L to R) Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in Alvin Ailey’s *Revelations*. Photo by Paul Kolnik; Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater with Artistic Director Robert Battle, Associate Artistic Director Matthew Rushing, and Rehearsal Director Ronni Favors. Photo by Andre Eccles; Ailey’s Jacqueline Green and Yannick Lebrun at the top of The Woolworth Building. Photo by Mikey Pozarik; Ailey’s Jacqueline Green and Yannick Lebrun performing Alvin Ailey’s *Pas De Duke* at The Woolworth Building. Photo Courtesy of Ailey.

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(L to R) Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in Alvin Ailey’s *Revelations*; Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in *Testament* by Matthew Rushing, Clifton Brown, and Yusha-Marie Sorzano; Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in *Testament* by Matthew Rushing, Clifton Brown, and Yusha-Marie Sorzano.

All photos by Nicole Tintle at Wave Hill Public Garden & Cultural Center in Bronx, NY.

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## Calendar Listing Information

**Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater**, beloved as one of the world's most popular dance companies, will continue a tradition of uplifting and uniting audiences across the globe with a **free virtual engagement from December 2 – December 31, 2020** celebrating six decades of *Revelations*. Ailey's extraordinary dancers will elevate a legacy of innovation and excellence in artistry with a reimagined season featuring world premieres of Associate Artistic Director **Matthew Rushing**, in partnership with Company member and Assistant to the Rehearsal Director **Clifton Brown**, and former Company member **Yusha-Marie Sorzano's Testament** and **Jamar Roberts' A Jam Session for Troubling Times**. A variety of other distinct programs extend throughout the holidays, including Family Programs for *Revelations* and *Ailey & Ellington*; a celebration of acclaimed dancers **Glenn Allen Sims** and **Linda Celeste Sims** with a farewell tribute performance; and a series of *BattleTalk* conversations, moderated by Artistic Director **Robert Battle**. For further information, visit [www.alvinailey.org/virtalseason](http://www.alvinailey.org/virtalseason).

## Ailey's 2020 Holiday Virtual Season Program Dates and Times

Wed., Dec. 2 @ 7:30pm ET - Dec. 9:	Opening Night Virtual Benefit: "Revelations Reimagined"
Sat., Dec. 5 @ 2:00pm ET – Dec. 12:	Family Program: <i>Ailey &amp; Ellington / BattleTalk</i> with Wynton Marsalis
Mon., Dec. 7 @ 7:30pm ET – Dec. 14:	<i>Dancing Spirit / BattleTalk</i> with Reverend Dr. Eboni Marshall Turman & Toshi Reagon
Wed., Dec. 9 @ 7:30pm ET – Dec. 16:	Celebrating Glenn Allen Sims & Linda Celeste Sims
Fri., Dec. 11 @ 7:30pm ET – Dec. 18:	<i>Dancing for Social Justice / BattleTalk</i> with Kyle Abraham, Jawole Willa Jo Zollar & Bryan Stevenson
Mon., Dec. 14 @ 7:30pm ET – Dec. 21:	World Premiere: <i>A Jam Session for Troubling Times / BattleTalk</i> with Jamar Roberts
Thurs., Dec. 17 @ 7:30pm ET – Dec. 24:	World Premiere: <i>Testament</i>
Sat., Dec. 19 @ 2:00pm ET – Dec. 26:	Family Program: <i>Revelations</i>
Wed., Dec. 23 @ 7:30pm ET – Dec. 31:	<i>Decades of Revelations</i>

## **ABOUT ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER**

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, recognized by U.S. Congressional resolution as a vital American "Cultural Ambassador to the World," grew from a now-fabled March 1958 performance in New York that changed forever the perception of American dance. Founded by Alvin Ailey, posthumous recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom – the nation's highest civilian honor, and guided by Judith Jamison beginning in 1989, the Company is now led by Robert Battle, whom Judith Jamison chose to succeed her on July 1, 2011. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has performed for an estimated 25 million people in 71 countries on six continents, promoting the uniqueness of the African-American cultural experience and the preservation and enrichment of the American modern dance tradition. In addition to being the Principal Dance Company of New York City Center, where its performances have become a year-end tradition, the Ailey company performs annually at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC, the Auditorium Theatre in Chicago, The Fox Theatre in Atlanta, Zellerbach Hall in Berkeley, CA and at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark (where it is the Principal Resident Affiliate), and appears frequently in other major theaters throughout the world during extensive yearly tours. The Ailey organization also includes Ailey II (1974), a second performing company of emerging young dancers and innovative choreographers; The Ailey School (1969), one of the most extensive dance training programs in the world; Ailey Arts in Education & Community Programs, which brings dance into the classrooms, communities and lives of people of all ages; and The Ailey Extension (2005), a program offering dance and fitness classes to the general public, which began with the opening of Ailey's permanent home—the largest building dedicated to dance in New York City, the dance capital of the world —named The Joan Weill Center for Dance, at 55<sup>th</sup> Street at 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue in New York City. For more information, visit [www.alvinailey.org](http://www.alvinailey.org).

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