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

“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.

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.

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 under served 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 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. Under the vision of Artistic Director Francesca Harper, Ailey II will continue to expand the bridge from the classroom to the stage that Alvin Ailey created to constantly propel each new generation of artists forward.

AILEY EXTENSION

Ailey Extension offers students around the world “real classes for real people” at all levels in a welcoming, non-competitive environment. Nearly 40 dynamic classes are offered each week with in-studio, virtual, and hybrid class options, taught by expert teachers in West African, Zumba®, Hip-Hop, Ballet, Horton (the modern dance technique featured in Mr. Ailey’s classic, Revelations) and more.

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.
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 Alley 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 Alley 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 Alley’s national and international tours.
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 AlleyCamp – 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.”
“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.”

“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.”

“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 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.”
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 Alley organization. A frequent choreographer and artist in residence at Alley since 1999, he has set many of his works on Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and Aliley II, and at The Ailey School. The Company’s current repertory includes his ballets Ella, For Four, In/Side, Love Stories finale, Mass, 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 is a recipient of the 2021 Dance Magazine Award and has honorary doctorates from The University of the Arts, Marymount Manhattan College and Fordham University. 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 Aliley School and later became a member of Aliley 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 2010 and became Associate Artistic Director in 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 Aliley 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 assertting the prominence of the arts in our culture, and she remains committed to promoting the significance of the Aliley 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 Aliley 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 Aliley 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 Aliley’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 Aliley’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 Aliley’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 BFA 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 Aliley School as a Fellowship student. Ms. Favors was a member of Aliley 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 AlileyCamp in Kansas City and served as artistic director of the Camp. She is the founding director of Children’s Aid AlileyCamp New York and provided guidance in the national implementation of the AlileyCamp 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

LLOYD A. BOYD III

(Cleveland, OH) began dancing at the age of 13 at the Cleveland School of the Arts. Mr. Boyd is also an alumnus of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. He has worked with choreographers Bill T. Jones, Susan Jaffe, Juel D. Lane, and Larry Keigwin and was a dancer in Rasta Thomas’ Bad Boys of Dance & Ailey II. Mr. Boyd danced in the 2018 Video Music Awards show with rap artist ASAP ROCKY & Travis Scott, The Metropolitan Opera’s production of La Traviata, and the international tour of the Broadway musical An American in Paris, choreographed by Christopher Wheeldon. This is his first season with the Company. Instagram: @lloydaboys

JEROBOAM BOZEMAN

(Brooklyn, NY) began his 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-medalist of the NAACP ACT-SO Competition in Dance. He performed in the Broadway musical Aida (international tour in China), and with PHILADANCO!, Donald Byrd’s Spectrum Dance Theater, and Ailey II. Mr. Bozeman was a guest artist with The Royal Ballet and was nominated as one of “25 to Watch,” by Dance Magazine in 2018. He was featured in Bud Light’s NFL 100th commercial and Pyer Moss’s 2021 “Wat U Iz,” fashion show. Mr. Bozeman is an adjunct professor at NYU Tisch School for Dance. He has appeared in Vanity Fair, Neiman Marcus, Double Magazine, Seattle Met, and The New York Times. Mr. Bozeman joined the Company in 2013.

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 Alvin 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 is a 2021 dance fellowship recipient from the Princess Grace Foundation-USA. Ms. Campbell was also 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 Aliley/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. Mr. Brown rejoined the Company in 2017 and is the Assistant Rehearsal Director.

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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.

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

CAROLINE T. DARTEY
(Geneva, Switzerland) trained in rhythmic gymnastics in her hometown at the age of five, eventually rising to national and international levels and becoming the Swiss champion in her category from 2009 to 2011. She later began dancing at the Conservatoire Populaire de Musique, Danse et Théâtre of Geneva. Ms. Dartey also trained at The Ailey School as a scholarship student and performed in Alvin Ailey’s Memoria during Ailey’s 2017 New York City Center season. She was a member of Ailey II from 2018 to 2020 and has performed works choreographed by Darrell Grand Moultrie, Uri Sands, Bradley Shelver, Troy Powell, Robert Battle, Amy Hall Garner, Kirven Douthit-Boyd, Andrea Miller, Alia Kache, and Yannick Lebrun. Ms. Dartey joined the Company in 2021. Instagram: @caroline_dartey

GHRAI DEVORE-STOKES
(Washington, D.C.) trained at the Kirov Academy, Ballet Chicago, Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, American Ballet Theatre, and Alonzo King’s LINES Ballet. She began her professional career with Chicago-based dance company Hubbard Street 2, and was a member of Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, Deeply Rooted Dance Theater 2, Dance Works Chicago, and Ailey II. Ms. DeVore-Stokes 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. Her film credits include Swamp Lake and Codeswitch. She has modeled for Lululemon and Vogue. Ms. DeVore-Stokes joined the Company in 2010. She would like to thank The Creator from whom all blessings flow. Instagram: @ghrai_
SOLOMON DUMAS
(Chicago, IL) (he, him, his) was introduced to dance through AileyCamp. 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 Al ley II and joined the Company in 2016. Instagram: @solemn_on

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.

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, Edward 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. In November 2021 he will perform in Twyla Now, New York City Center’s celebration of choreographer Twyla Tharp. Mr. Gilmer joined the Company.

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 Al ley 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 Muette 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.

SOLOMON DUMAS
(Chicago, IL) (he, him, his) was introduced to dance through AileyCamp. 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 Al ley II and joined the Company in 2016. Instagram: @solemn_on

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.

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, Edward 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. In November 2021 he will perform in Twyla Now, New York City Center’s celebration of choreographer Twyla Tharp. Mr. Gilmer joined the Company.

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 Al ley 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 Muette 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.
WHO’S WHO IN THE COMPANY

ASHLEY KAYLYNN GREEN
(Charleston, SC) began her training at Dance Explosion Arts Center where she found her love for dance. She trained in a variety of styles including ballet, modern, jazz, tap, and hip-hop. In 2020, Ms. Green received her BFA in Dance from Point Park University in Pittsburgh, PA, under the direction of Garfield Lemonius. There, she performed works by Peter Chu, Aszure Barton, Kyle Abraham, and Darrell Grand Moultrie. Prior to joining the Company in 2021, she danced with Whim W’Him Seattle Contemporary Dance.

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 Alley II and joined the Company in 2011. Instagram: @JaGreen711

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 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. In 2019 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. In 2021 Ms. Harris worked with Twyla Tharp in her production of Twyla Now alongside artists of New York City Ballet and American Ballet Theatre. She was a member of Alley II and joined the Company in 2014.

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.
WHO’S WHO IN THE COMPANY

YAZZMEEN LAILDER
(Miami, FL) graduated from New World School of the Arts. She trained at Traci Young-Bryon’s Young Contemporary Dance Theatre and The Ailey School summer intensive. Ms. Laidler received her BFA from The 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 Dwight Rhoden, Camille A. Brown, Rennie Harris, and Azure Barton, among others. She has performed as a guest artist with Owen/Cox Dance and is a former member of Ailey II. She is the founder of Time Revealed Dance Intensive in Miami, FL, which brings highly acclaimed artists to aid in the cultivation of community for aspiring dancers. Ms. Laidler joined the company in 2018. Instagram: @yazzmeen.laidler

RENALDO MAURICE
(Gary, IN) began his training with Tony Washington 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, Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, and 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. Mr. Maurice has choreographed and performed with Grammy nominated artist Jazzmeia Horn. He has also incorporated his passion for the arts with social responsibility as the co-artistic director of the South Shore Dance Alliance in Indiana. He was a member of Ailey II, joined the Company in 2011, and rejoined in 2019. Facebook: @Maurice Gardner. Instagram: @mauricerenaldo

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, and in 2021, he created Lora for ABT Studio Company. Mr. Lebrun was a member of Ailey II and joined the Company in 2008.

ASHLEY MAYEUX
(Houston, TX) began her dance training at the High School for Performing and Visual Arts and graduated cum laude with a BFA from SUNY Purchase. Ms. Mayeux continued her studies at the Dance Theatre of Harlem and went on to perform in the tour of the Broadway musical Aida. She has been featured in publications including The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, Pointe Magazine, and Dance Magazine. Ms. Mayeux was a member of Complexions Contemporary Ballet from 2012 to 2016, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater from 2016 to 2018, and Alonzo King LINES Ballet from 2018-2021. She rejoined the Ailey company in 2021. Instagram: @Courtesy_ofhtwn
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 Aliley 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 INDIHRA PEREYRA**
(Lawrence, MA) began her formal 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 NYC, Ms. Pereyra was closely mentored by Earl Mosley and danced with Camille A. Brown & Dancers, 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 certified in SAFE® FLOOR, is a Zena Rommett Floor-Barre™ teacher, and a WISDOM coach for children. 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 before receiving his BFA in Dance from SUNY Purchase. Mr. Monteiro has worked with Sidra Bell Dance New York, Elisa Monte Dance, Keigwin + Company, BODYTRAFFIC, and A.I.M by Kyle Abraham. 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 2019 Mr. Monteiro was selected to participate in Merce Cunningham Trust’s Night of 100 Solos: A Centennial Event. His choreography has been presented as part of Ailey’s 2021 Virtual Spirit Gala, as well as at other festivals and institutions across the U.S. Mr. Monteiro is currently on faculty at Tisch School of the Arts at NYU. He was in Aliley II and joined the Company in 2015. Instagram: @chlvrmntro

**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 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. She joined the Company in 2019. Ms. Quinn is beyond thrilled and honored to be a part of the Aliley family and legacy and hopes you enjoy Aliley’s return to live theater! Instagram: @mirandaming4
KANJI SEGAWA

(Kanagawa, Japan) began his dance training with his mother Erika Akoh, studying 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. He was a member of Alley II from 2000 to 2002 and Battleworks from 2002 to 2010. Mr. Segawa worked extensively with Mark Morris from 2004 to 2011, appearing with Mark Morris Dance Group and as a principal dancer in John Adams’ Nixon in China at The Metropolitan Opera. He is a master teacher and choreographer for companies and educational institutions. His work Future premiered during Alley’s 2021 Virtual Spirit Gala. Since 1999 Mr. Segawa has been Creative Associate for Jessica Lang, assisting her creations for companies including American Ballet Theatre, Pacific Northwest Ballet, The Washington Ballet, and The National Ballet of Japan. Mr. Segawa joined the Company in 2011. www.kanjisegawa.com

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 in Dance with degrees in dance and communications. Ms. Spears attended summer intensives at The Juilliard School and American Ballet Theatre. She is a 2015 Princess Grace Award recipient, the 2020 Shirley Hall Bass Legacy Award Recipient, and the Co-Founder & Director of ArtSea Dance, an outreach and dance management company based in the Bahamas. Ms. Spears is currently signed with Wilhelmina Models and graduated from Harvard Business School’s “Crossover Into Business” program. She continues to serve as a mentor by Co-Directing the Alley Student Alley Professional Mentor Program for The Ailey School. She was a member of Alley II and joined the Company in 2018. Instagram: @bahamaballerina

CONSTANCE STAMATIOU

(Charlotte, NC) began her dance training at Pat Hall’s Dance Unlimited and North Carolina Dance Theatre under the direction of Salvatore Aiello. 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, Good Morning America and The Today Show. Ms. Stamatiou has danced in the films Shake Rattle & Roll and Dan Pritzker’s Bolden and the commercial I Love NY. She is a mother of two. Ms. Stamatiou was a member of Alley II, joined the Company in 2007, and rejoined in 2016. Instagram: @constance.stamatiou

JERMAINE TERRY

(Washington, D.C.) began his dance training in Kissimmee, Florida, at James Dance Center. He graduated cum laude with a BFA in dance performance from the University of South Florida, where he received scholarships for excellence in performance and choreography. He also received the Distinguished Alumnus Award from USF for outstanding service to the arts. Mr. Terry was a scholarship student at The Allev School and a member of Alley II. He has performed with Buglisi Dance Theatre, Arch Dance, Dance Iquail, PHILADANCO!, and as a guest artist on the TV show So You Think You Can Dance. He has designed costumes for New York City Ballet, Alley II, PHILADANCO!, and The Black Iris Project, to name a few. His eveningwear designs have been in Essence online and photographed by the late Bill Cunningham for the style section of The New York Times. Mr. Terry joined the Company in 2010. Instagram: @Jerms83.
WHO’S WHO IN THE COMPANY

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 Sofia 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 Alley II and joined the Company in 2018. Website: www.christoperrwilson.com. Instagram: @christopher.r.wilson

BRANDON MICHAEL 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 Alley’s Memoria during Alley’s 60th Anniversary season at New York City Center. He was briefly a member of Alley II before joining the Company in 2019.
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 92nd Street Y.

1960 - Alvin Ailey choreographs his classic masterpiece Revelations, which brings international acclaim. During the organization’s first 10 years, Aliley 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 Aliley 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 - Alley II is founded to develop young artists and new dance audiences.

       CBS airs “Alley 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.


1983 - AAADT celebrates its 25th 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 AlleyCamp program.

1991 - AlleyCamp established in New York City. This program is successfully replicated in cities nationwide and continues to inspire thousands of inner-city youth.
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.”


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 Alley” 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 than 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 Alley as part of the American Choreographers stamp series, which commemorates four visionary 20th century choreographers who left a profound mark on the language of 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 Alley 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.
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 50th 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 50th 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 55th street in front of New York City Center. An estimated 40,000 people attend one of these events. AAADT launches its five-week 50th 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 50th 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.

AlleyCamp 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. AlleyCamps 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.
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.

Alley board appoints Bennett Rink as the new Executive Director of Alvin Alley 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 Alley 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.

Alley celebrated its 40th 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 Alley in recognition of his contributions to civil rights and dance in America.

2015 – Alvin Alley 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 Alley 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 Alley’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 Alley, an inspiring children’s book based on Mr. Battle’s life. His landmark year continues with the December debut of Awakened, 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.

AlleyCamp 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.
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 Alley 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, Iu + 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.
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 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 Alley’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.

Since the launch of Ailey All Access in March 2020, Ailey has reached over 46 million people in 121 countries globally 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 won TimeOut New York’s “Time In” Archive Treasure award for best archival streaming series and outlets like Vogue and Dance Magazine included works by Ailey artists on their “Best Of” lists for dance films created during the pandemic.
2020 - Ailey’s first virtual season, Ailey Forward, reached over 717,000 viewers, with eight unique programs from December 2-31. Two dance films were created and premiered: A Jam Session for Troubling Times by Resident Choreographer Jamar Roberts and Testament, a collaboration between Associate Artistic Director Matthew Rushing, Clifton Brown and Yusha-Marie Sorzano, in honor of the 60th anniversary of Ailey’s classic Revelations.

2021 - Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater marks the 50th anniversary of Alvin Ailey’s signature solo Cry, with the streaming of a new video adaptation in May. Choreographed on Artistic Director Emerita Judith Jamison as a birthday present for his mother, Mr. Ailey dedicated the enduring work of American art to “all Black women everywhere—especially our mothers.”

In January, director Jamila Wignot’s powerful AILEY documentary premiered at the prestigious Sundance Film Festival heralded as a must-see and later in June a Tribeca Film Festival critics pick. This resonant biography of trailblazer Alvin Ailey is told through Ailey’s own words, along with interviews with those close to him, and featured evocative archival footage and rarely seen historic performances.

Internationally renowned performer, choreographer, director and multidisciplinary artist Francesca Harper is appointed Ailey II Artistic Director, alongside Rehearsal Director Lakey Evans-Peña. Ms. Harper’s personal connections with Ailey are deeply rooted, as she received training at The Ailey School while her mother, the late Denise Jefferson directed the program from 1984-2010. She will curate and oversee all aspects of the Company’s artistic and educational initiatives while honoring the traditions, legacy and creative spirit of Alvin Ailey.
What Critics are Saying About Ailey

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater & Robert Battle

“Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater – moves with our times.”
*The Guardian*, Sanjoy Roy – August 21, 2020

“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 next generation of Ailey is in good hands.”

“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 Aliley 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.”

“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

REPERTORY

BUSK (Azure Barton)
“...her intensity and originality are always worth watching— not just the large-scale group actions but the moving little gestures, the human gestures, that catch your eye...”

“To busk is to entertain with the body. And so Azure Barton’s exquisite work did just that...”
 Medium, Is a Freeling – December 24, 2019

Cry (Alvin Ailey)
“In three sections, Cry explores physical hardship, emotional suffering and — to the Voices of East Harlem’s “Right On Be Free” — boundless joy. Structurally, it builds to an emphatic release...”

“...emotional and spiritual transcendence...”

“...one of Ailey’s masterpieces... Cry is Ailey’s tribute to black women everywhere — their joys, their sorrows, their hardships, their strength. The work... never pales.”
 The Atlanta Journal Constitution

For Four (Robert Battle)
“For Four, a new piece by the company’s artistic director, Robert Battle, is more intriguing. Battle explains that the four-person work “speaks to the pent-up energy over the last year and a half,” and says that it’s a manifestation of being “free to express ourselves.” With all its spinning and attitude to a jazz track by Wynton Marsalis, it can seem like simple release. But there’s also a darker, more desperate undertone, a hint of having to perform.”
 The New York Times, Brian Seibert – June 24, 2021

Holding Space (Jamar Roberts)
“Holding Space” was made for camera but looks like it would adapt powerfully to the live stage. What strikes you immediately is Roberts’ gift for commanding the total stage picture. A grid of blue lights blasts through a field of 12 silhouetted dancers, their shadowed bodies limned by the faint outline of translucent shirts and pants (Roberts created the scenic design and costumes)... The aural landscape — five works by Canadian sound artist Tim Hecker — is overwhelming and futuristic, yet terrifyingly beautiful... The metaphoric ideas that follow are powerfully simple. Mid-dance, the rolling metal frame of a cube appears, entrapping dancers for solos. What makes the dance entrancing is the texture of the movement — much of it built upon an elegant balletic crouch, the wide fourth position of the feet — and a subtle difference in emotional tenor between each solo... “Holding Space” is tense but be advised that a blessed release is coming.”
 San Francisco Chronicle Datebook, Rachel Howard – June 10, 2021

Lazarus (Rennie Harris)
“Despite the Ailey troupe’s reputation for inspirational art, Lazarus isn’t exactly uplifting. Much of it reads like a nightmare, a dense and turbid vision of African-American history... And yet Lazarus does inspire. Long skeins of glorious dancing — of quick-stepping, rhythmically complex Philadelphia footwork delivered in a cool, quiet manner — speak of inheritance, resilience, even confidence. More than a resurrection, Lazarus is a reminder of dark days before the current ones, and of how to dance through them with your eyes open.”
 The New York Times, Brian Seibert – April 16, 2020

“...dazzles with its thrilling interpretation of African American lives... it could not be a better tribute to Ailey... to create art that expressed cultural identity in ways both profound and uplifting.”
 The Guardian, Sarah Crompton – September 8, 2019

“...compelling two-part work inspired by the legacy of Ailey and how it was connected to the civil-rights movement. Many of the piece’s images are dark, but it eventually resolves into an exhilarating celebration of life, dance, and the body in motion.”
 The New Yorker, Marina Harss – May 13, 2019

“America’s hottest ballet. Choreographer Rennie Harris, international pioneer of street dance theater, isn’t big on accepting praise. He might have to learn, because he has elicited unprecedented adulation from eminent dance critics... It’s Lazarus that’s the talk of the dance world at this moment.”
 The Philadelphia Inquirer, Lauren McCutcheon, February 28, 2019

“Hallelujah! ...it’s a story about all of us... We’ll get one group of people doing an ensemble dance in impeccable, rousing unison. Hooray! You can fly to Heaven on that! ... It is hard not to think, here, of the conclusion of Ailey’s Revelations ... So what a joy to see, in the Company’s new artist-in-residence, a white-hot conjunction of emotion and intelligence, not to speak of steps.”
 The New Yorker, Joan Aocella, issue of December 17, 2018
WHAT CRITICS ARE SAYING ABOUT AILEY

“... stands out as an often-thrilling dance creation... Its action touches, with inspired help from Mr. Ross’s soundscape, on the struggles of African-Americans in Alley’s time and in that of our own... These two acts of dance theater build and crest in unusual and unexpected ways... curtain calls that rouse the audience to its feet...”
   The Wall Street Journal, Robert Greskovic, December 12, 2018

“A powerful take on African-American history... auspiciously bold premiere... For Alley’s extraordinary troupers, he has fashioned a maze of vintage steps more exhilaratingly complex than anything you’ll find on YouTube or on the streets. The audience goes crazy...”
   Financial Times, Apollinaire Scherr, December 3, 2018

“... brings Aliey back to life... by showing why he still matters to a living artist of Mr. Harris’s caliber... many brilliant examples in a score by Darrin Ross that is rarely simple... When that music is going, Mr. Harris gives us something like heaven.”
   The New York Times, Brian Seibert, December 3, 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 Aliley’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)
“...fierce elegance....”
   The New York Times

“An enthralling display of modern dance technique... a moving combination of plastic beauty and passionate expression.”
   The Sunday Times

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 50th Anniversary Gala] – December 3, 2008

“The centrality of Revelations in the repertory of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is like nothing else in dance. Ballet companies may perform The Nutcracker every winter; the Aliey troupe performs Revelations on nearly every program, the whole year through. It’s the blueprint for most other works the company dances and the standard against which they’re all judged. It’s the perennial billboard for the company’s brand and its bible, too. ... the spiritual sustenance this company provides, and not just in “Revelations.”
   The New York Times, Brian Seibert – December 18, 2020

“...Revelations captures the urgency and the yearning expressed in spirituals such as ‘Fix Me Jesus’ and ‘I Wanna Be Ready’. Like all great art, it never gets old. In fact, in recent years, with civil rights at the forefront of our national conscience, its power has only grown.”
   The New Yorker, Marina Harss – December 7, 2020

“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.”

“A master choreographer... Lazarus is about resurrection and, for Mr. Harris, that circles back to Aliey: With each dancing generation, with every performance of his 1960 masterpiece Revelations, Ailey is reborn. ‘He’s still affecting 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
WHAT CRITICS ARE SAYING ABOUT AILEY

“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…”

“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.”

“…modern dance’s unquestionable greatest hit, anchoring countless performances and inspiring applause before it even starts.”

“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.”

**Shelter (Jawole Willa Jo Zollar)**

“Jawole Willa Jo Zollar’s *Shelter* seems perennially timely… it has become newly urgent during the coronavirus crisis… 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… As a voice urges “keep walking, keep walking” it is impossible not to think of today’s migration crisis, another flight from homelands… 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.”
*The Guardian*, Sanjot Roy – August 21, 2020

“…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.”

“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

**Unfold (Robert Battle)**

“A breathtaking, highly unusual duet.”
*Chicago Sun-Times*

“A highly original duet, mixing classic romanticism and odd, startling twists.”
*Chicago Tribune*

**The River (Alvin Ailey)**

“…Ailey at his best, a piece ambitiously structured and wonderfully dynamic… The choreography flows from cool blue to red hot, an adventure in momentum… The company shines.”
*The Times*, Debra Craine – Sept. 7, 2007
WHAT CRITICS ARE SAYING ABOUT AILEY

THE DANCERS

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

“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 transfixed.”
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

“Ghraiv DeVore-Stokes breaks into the first solo, tracing the edge of the stage, her movements alternately frenzied and robotic, powered as all the movement is in the program by that unshakable strength of the Aliley-trained core.”
San Francisco Chronicle Datebook, Rachel Howard – June 10, 2021

“That Goddess Quality? This Aliley Dancer’s Got It… supremely elegant…her facility is as natural as her poise. Regal and soft-spoken, she has delicate, feline bone structure and willowy… 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.”

“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 all to the work—not just physically, but spiritually.”
Dance Magazine, Charmaine Warren – December 16, 2019
Broadcast Highlights
2021-22 Season

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

**ABC – Good Morning America 3rd Hour:** Robert Battle discusses the film "Alley," which profiles the legendary choreographer and includes historic performances and interviews

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

**CNN:** Jamar Roberts shares why he expresses his voice through dance

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

**CBS 2 NY:** Robert Battle and the history of dance

**CNN:** Alvin Ailey Artistic Director Robert Battle answers the question: What drives you?

**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,** “New Documentary Showcases Life And Work Of Dance Great Alvin Ailey”– listen here.

**WNYC,** “Jamar Roberts, the First Resident Choreographer at Alvin Ailey” – listen here.

**NPR,** “Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Debuts ‘Lazarus’ To Celebrate 60th Anniversary” – listen here.
The company will celebrate Robert Battle’s 10 years as its artistic director.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater’s fall season at New York City Center will celebrate Robert Battle’s 10 years as artistic director, the company announced on Wednesday. After the difficulties of the past year, Battle (at right, with the dance company) is more open to embracing the occasion.

“Being a part of the problem solving that has taken place and kind of making our way through this has actually made me in a way own that 10 years a little bit more fully,” he said in an interview. “There’s something about going through that makes me think ‘Hey, if I’m going to go through this, then I’m going to definitely take the good and I’m going to go with it.’”

During his tenure at Ailey, Battle has founded the New Directions Choreography Lab, an initiative to support emerging and midcareer dancers, and named Jamar Roberts as the company’s first resident choreographer. “When I was first starting to create, I was fortunate to have David Parsons, who gave me the floor,” Battle said. “I’ve always wanted to pay that forward.”

His support has paid dividends. Roberts has created several critically acclaimed dances, including “Members Don’t Get Weary” and “Ode,” since taking up the post in 2019. And now, to concentrate on his choreography, Roberts is retiring from dancing; his farewell performance, on Dec. 9, was announced along with the season’s slate.

Two dances that had their debuts online will be performed live for the first time during the three-week City Center engagement. Battle’s “For Four,” a piece for four dancers set to a jazz score by Wynton Marsalis, will receive its full stage debut alongside Roberts’s “Holding Space,” on Dec. 3.

New productions of older works will also be featured throughout the season: Ailey’s “Pas de Duke,” which was performed by Jacqueline Green and Yannick Lebrun at the top of the Woolworth Building for a dance video in 2020; “The River,” Ailey’s collaboration with Duke Ellington from 1970, an Ailey solo, “Reflections in D”; and “Unfold,” a newer work by Battle.

Looking to the future, Battle said he would like to focus more on preserving and sharing works by underappreciated choreographers: “The notion of being a repository for historic works, I’m really interested in really mining that.”


‘When I was first starting to create, I was fortunate to have David Parsons, who gave me the floor. I’ve always wanted to pay that forward.’

ROBERT BATTLE
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
Leaps & Bounds

After a year of solo practices and virtual performances, dancers are back on stage doing what they do best: performing in front of live audiences. But for some of the field's biggest, most transformative stars, choreographing the future of an art form steeped in tradition means leaving some things in the past.

Photographs by AMY TROOST
Styling by SAMIRA NASR
Watch Harper’s BAZAAR ‘Let’s Dance’ online video featuring Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater’s Courtney Celeste Spears here.
Now They Can Focus On the Choreography

By BRIAN SEIBERT

When star dancers retire, it's always a little sad. And if those dancers are still in their prime, fans can feel an especially acute sense of loss. The performances that won't happen are easy to imagine.

But in the uncommon case when the dancer has already achieved distinction as a choreographer and is retiring to focus on that craft, the loss is offset by potential gain. The dancer will be absent from the stage, but the dancer's spirit and sensibility might spread across it.

This fall, the uncommon is happening twice. On Oct. 9, Lauren Lovette is retiring from New York City Ballet. On Dec. 9, Jamar Roberts is giving his farewell performance with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Both are beloved dancers, unostentatious standouts in companies that are constellations of stars. Both are choreographers whose artistic voices have already made a difference.

Lovette has been a radiant presence at City Ballet from the moment she joined the corps in 2010. Within a few months, she was already attracting attention in principal roles. Beneath a sweetness and sparkle, you could sense a shading and inner life that might mature with time. That's what happened.

And in 2017, a year after she had been promoted to principal, she revealed other partially hidden gifts: those of a dance maker. As a student, she had shown choreographic talent, but while concentrating on performing, she had let that skill undeveloped. Now, it has blossomed.

The three works she has made for City Ballet have increased in ambition and assurance. Like her onstage persona, they have more depth and nuance than the surface might lead you to assume. In particular, her disregard of gender norms — men partnering men, women partnering women — has the beautiful matter-of-factness of a fait accompli.

But breaking with convention still takes bravery, as it does for Lovette, 28, to break out on her own. Her spirit is already spreading. American Ballet Theater performed her “La Follia Variations” on its 2021 cross-country summer tour and has programmed that work for its fall season in New York.

Roberts's choreographic gift was hidden for longer. He joined the Alenity company in 2002. That he left twice — and returned — suggests a restlessness, though what he showed onstage was mainly the quiet strength of a large, graceful man and a subtle interpretive intelligence.

The first work he made for the Alenity company, in 2017, came as a surprise. Here were signs of daring and a rare ability to approach complex, powerful emotions not directly (a recipe for corniness) but through an idiosyncratic rhythmic and physical sensibility.

After he became the Alenity troupe's first resident choreographer, in 2019, those signs became unmistakable. And, amazingly, during the pandemic, his artistic stature has continued to grow. “Cooped,” a short film he made on his iPad early in the pandemic, and a later film, “Colored Me,” should endure as two of the most potent dance works of the period.

The solo Roberts made for himself for the 2020 Fall for Dance festival can serve as a reminder of what we'll be missing when he stops dancing. But the Alenity season in which he's retiring as a performer also includes his new group piece “Holding Space,” and it's a winner. His spirit is spreading into Lovette's territory, too: His first work for City Ballet debuts in February.

The choreographers Jamar Roberts and Lauren Lovette started off as beloved dancers.
“Something’s Brewing”

By: Marina Harss
June 2021 Issue
Something’s Brewing

As both a performer and a choreographer, Jamar Roberts gives the distinct impression that much is happening beneath the surface.

Jamar Roberts stands still, all six feet and four inches of him, arms quietly at his sides. As a man’s voice is heard—the first two words of text are “Black in…”—Roberts steps into a wide stance, arms held out to their fullest width. He fills every inch of the stage with his presence. Then he begins to lower both arms, slowly curving them inward. As if by the flip of a switch on the word “now,” he leans his weight, twists his torso, and curves into a deep backbend. His body responds as if an electric current were going through it.

The dance—a MemoriaManga (Black War-rior/Black God) solo he created for himself as part of last year’s Fall for Dance festival, commissioned by New York City Center—fifteen minutes long, filled with ries and falls, it, as a killer. Roberts told me recently, “I hope I never have to dance it again,” he says.

Yet the sole exemplifies the qualities that make Roberts such a compelling performer and, more recently, such an astonishing choreographer. There is his stillness, the way he can hold a moment, and all the quickness in it, while maintaining a sense of breath and thought. There are the sudden contrasts between speed and slowness, strength and delicacy.

A lot of these dynamics radiate from the power and malice of his back—“That’s where the movement starts from, the intent of it,” says fellow Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre dancer Donte DeYou Stroey. “Watching him is amazing.”
because you learn so much about yourself and about dance."

But beyond all that, Roberts, and his choreography, gives the clear and deep impression that there is much happening beneath the surface. He has emerged, in the past two years, as a choreographic voice of uncommon force and originality. His work captures the spirit of our age—full of doubt, pain, but also grace. Two years ago he became resident choreographer at Al- ley, where he has danced since 2003. More recently, he earned a fellowship at NYU’s Center for Ballet and the Arts, and has commissions for Vail Dance Festival and New York City Ballet in the works. Even the pandemic hasn’t put a crimp on his creativity. If anything, it has pushed him even further.

When he created Giuseppe, a solo for Works & Process Artists’ Virtual Commission in May 2020, Roberts threw himself into the process of finding new ways to film movement with the best camera he had, his iPad. Despite no experience in film, he ended up creating something original, strangely detached from reality, disorienting. "I think I used a large-screen iPad, a yoga mat, some Scunci clips and a milk crate," he says. Out of that and the sound of blaring hip-hop, he created a space outside of time, as well as a powerful image of the Black body in pain, trapped in a non-sculpting space, with no way out.

This ability to make something so visually complex and compelling out of just a few elements—sound, the body, a yoga mat—is something he associates with his difficult childhood, growing up with little money, a mother who struggled with addiction, a grandmother who taught him how to dance. As a kid, he largely had to keep himself entertained. He would retreat into his own world and dance, or create little figures out of pieces of wire. Later, dance became a salvation, the thing that took him to a different place. "It reminded me of when people say that African Americans, throughout their entire journey, have been making something out of nothing," he says. He has the patience, the focus, and the imagination to make something new each time.

At Allez, Roberts, 38, is known as a quiet person who keeps to himself. "When I see him walk into the studio, or just walking around, he looks like there's something bubbling up," says Ronald K. Brown, who has choreographed on him many times. "He's creamy. It can read as shy, but his colleagues know better. I think that's where he lives, in that space within," Robert Battle, artistic director of Allez since 2011, says.

For the first time Battle asked Roberts to become the company's first official resident choreographer in 2019 (the impor- tation was that he would work for six years). He had been watching Roberts closely for a while. "I knew he came to me and declared himself a choreographer," Battle says. "But I had been watching him, being a supporter, seeing him improve little things. Sometimes you can just tell. Even the way he interpolates other people’s choreography told me something about his creativity." After seeing a piece Roberts made for Allez II, Battle commissioned his first work for the main company in 2017. He also knew about Roberts’ other artistic pursuits: drawing and fashion design.

Roberts has left Allez twice, once early on, to pursue a
"He works as if he had a secret."

Ronald K. Brown

degree in fashion design. "I hated it. Sitting through lectures about how to make a Peter Pan collar, I really wasn't into that," he says. It was during his second year away from Alley, from 2011–12, when he was married, he says—"that he discovered his love for choreography. It happened while he was teaching at the Miami studio of his longtime mentor and teacher Angel Fraser-Logan. (As an adolescent, he had studied dance with Logan at Dance Empire as well as at New World School of the Arts.) He spent hours there making dances for the students and for friends in college nearby. "It was a very intense and immersive kind of experience. And I started to notice that there was something there, something happening with the movement," he says. After a year, feeling that he would have more opportunities to choreograph in New York City, he decided to go back to Alley.

But it was his first dance for Alley. Member's Don't Get Weary that really set him on his current path. When it premiered in 2017, it looked like the creation of a much more veteran choreographer. Its intentions and emotions—conflict and pain, struggle and resilience, the fatigue of hard work—felt distilled, reduced to their essence. "Like an alchemist, he got to the heart of the matter," says Battle.

When Roberts started the piece, he had come to an idea and an atmosphere. His choice of music (John Coltrane) and the costumes he had designed (plain work clothes) had already created a sense of time and place, a space for the dancers to exist in," says DeVoe-Sookes. Once that space had been defined, the process of making the piece was one of exploration and testing. "Whenever I go to make something there's a large area of unknown. I'm always throwing myself into a space where I don't have the answer. I love doing the work to find the answers," he says.

He goes through a similar process with the music he chooses. Roberts intentionally selects scores he is not only drawn to, but also challenged by. When he first listened to the music for Member's Don't Get Weary, the complexity and richness of Coltrane's music made him nervous, he admits. "But then you sit with it, something begins to emerge. It's a big, big album, and you keep pulling on that string. In this case, pulling on the string means hearing, literally, to all the nuances in the music, figuring out how they work together, their energetic flow, finding a way to physicalize those connections.

Like Member's Don't Get Weary, his other works have been set to jazz, including classic and bebop and avant-garde. But he came to jazz like Roberts grew up listening to R&B and pop and alternative rock. However, when he started to think seriously about choreography, he felt that he needed to turn to music that gave him more space to explore. Pop was not enough. "I wanted to develop a more sophisticated ear, to invest in listening to more sounds," he says. Using classical music felt insubstantial. So he turned to jazz, America's own classical idiom, rooted in African-American musical traditions. His understanding of jazz is something he has had to work at, he says. "It had to figure out how to do it—how to take myself there." Expanding his musical palate still takes up a lot of his free time.

But musical understanding is central to his craft. When you watch him dance, or see others dance his work, it's like seeing the most travel through muscle and bone. "The way he treats music is beyond anything I've seen," DeVoe-Sookes says. "He'll hear things that we didn't even know were there."

Roberts doesn't seem interested in making slight, throwaway dances. "I want that piece to be about this duality of light and dark, what W.E.B. Du Bois called double consciousness," he says of Member's Don't Get Weary. "Almost being Black and being American, and the idea of always having to fight for freedom and rights for your rights, even though you're American."

Struggle, and the presence that builds up because of that struggle, is a powerful motor behind his creative process. But his dances are also full of mystery and abstraction. Nothing is spelled out. "He works as if he had a secret," Brown says. In Roberts' 2019 Ode, a response to the shootings of Black men and women, there were no obvious images of gun violence. And Member's Don't Get Weary contains almost no literal references to the words in the text to which it is set, except when Roberts marks "on his knees, to the words "Black is marching in Alabama." Even that is fleeting and easy to miss.

But as you watch one of his pieces you feel as if you have been on a voyage through Roberts' mind, experiencing what this dancer—this idealized human—feels as he processes his thoughts about Blackness, about America, about Coltrane, about rhythm, about the sound of Nina Simone's fingers on the piano keys, about exhaustion, about hope.

Struggle lies both in the subject matter of his dances, which often touch on issues related to race, and also in the form of the dances themselves, the way they are constructed, the way the contrasts within them build tension and, eventually, release. "I think there's a lot to learn there, a lot of beauty," he says. He's not content to simply convey meanings form and craft are just as important.

It is part of what makes his dancers, and his dancing, so potent. They feel lived in, and pregnant with meaning. Just as crucially, he is able to communicate those qualities to the dancer he works with. "When I'm in the studio with Jamar," says DeVoe-Sookes, "I feel like I'm doing work that's really important and is going to push the field in a different direction." Just which direction that will be is yet to be seen. At Battle says, "He just getting started."

Martha Haras, a contributor to The New York Times, The New Yorker and Dance Magazine is writing a book about Albert Raineri.
Film looks at what made Mr. Ailey Mr. Ailey

By: Linda Matchan

July 25, 2021

At 92, Alvin Ailey, the dance pioneer who founded the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1958, is still a cultural touchstone for dancers and dance lovers around the world. His company has grown from a small group of dancers to a major force in the world of contemporary dance. But what made Ailey such a forceful presence in the dance world? This film, directed by Ailey's long-time friend and colleague, Massachusetts-based filmmaker and choreographer Sara Jane Johnson, explores Ailey's life and legacy through the lens of his work, his artistry, and his impact on the dance world.

Johnson, who worked with Ailey for many years, has created a compelling portrait of Ailey's life and work through interviews with dancers, choreographers, and other influential figures in the dance world. The film includes footage of Ailey's performances, as well as rare archival footage of the company's early days, providing a glimpse into the history of the Ailey company and its influence on the dance world.

The film also explores Ailey's personal life, including his early experiences as a dancer and his relationship with his controversial partner, dancer and choreographer Rennie Harris. Ailey's struggle with HIV/AIDS is also addressed, highlighting the challenges he and his colleagues faced in the early days of the disease.

Overall, this film offers a deep and insightful look into the life and legacy of Alvin Ailey, and is a must-see for anyone interested in dance and the impact of the arts in society.
The Man Behind the Dances

By: Gia Kourlas
July 23, 2021

Jamila Wignot’s documentary explores the life of Alvin Ailey.

TWO OFTEN, the idea of Alvin Ailey is reduced to a single dance: “Revelations.” His 1960 exploration of the Black experience remains a masterpiece, but it also overshadows the man who made it. How can an artist grow after such early success? Who was Alvin Ailey the man?

In “Ailey,” the director Jamila Wignot layers images, video and — most important — voice-overs from Ailey to create a portrait that feels as poetic and nuanced as choreography itself. Black-and-white footage of crowds filing into church, children playing, dance parties, and the dusty landscape of Texas (his birthplace) builds an atmosphere. Like Ailey’s dances, the documentary leaves you swimming in sensation.

Ailey’s story is told alongside the creation of “Lazarus,” a new dance by the contemporary choreographer Rennie Harris, whose homage to Ailey proposes an intriguing juxtaposition of past and present. In his search to reveal the man behind the legacy, Harris lands on the theme of resurrection. Ailey died in 1989, but his spirit lives on in his dancers.

But his early days weren’t easy. Born in 1931, Ailey never knew his father and recalls “being glued to my mother’s hip. Sloughing through the terrain. Branches slashing against a child’s body. Going from one place to another. Looking for a place to be. My mother off working in the fields. I used to pick cotton.”

He was only 4. Ailey spoke about how his dances were full of “dark deep things, beautiful things inside me that I’ve always been trying to get out.”

All the while, Ailey, who was gay, remained intensely private. Here, we grasp his anguish, especially after the sudden death of his friend, the choreographer and dancer Joyce Trisler. In her honor, he choreographed “Memoria” (1974), a dance of loneliness and celebration. “I couldn’t cry until I saw this piece,” he says.

Ailey’s mental health was fragile toward the end of his life; Wignot shows crowds converging on sidewalks, but instead of having them walk normally, she reverses their steps. He was suffering from AIDS.

Before his death, he passed on his company to Judith Jamison, who sums up his magnetic, enduring presence: “Alvin breathed in and never breathed out.”

Again, it’s that idea of resurrection. “We are his breath out,” she continues. “So that’s what we’re floating on, that’s what we’re living on.”
Anyone who has studied theater and dance will know the Alvin Alley American Dance Theater and its founder. Not only did Alley form a dance movement, but his company also became a pioneering force for Black artists as they traveled the world, introducing political themes and helping integrate the world of dance.

Street dancer-turned-choreographer Rennie Harris had heard the name but didn’t become interested in the Alley movement until late in the 2000s. “I was a hardcore dancer. At that point, I wasn’t feeling modern dance,” Harris explains.

Now the two are linked through the doc “Alley,” which will be released nationwide Aug. 6. The film highlights the legendary choreographer’s life and visionary work, with Harris interpreting his dances.

It was when Harris finally saw the trailblazing “Revelations,” the 1960s work that put Alley on the map, that he became inspired. Later, he was hired by the Alvin Alley company to re-create the choreographer’s works. In the doc, we see Harris workshopping “Lazarus,” a production about racial injustice in Jim Crow-era Texas. Director Jamila Wignot mixes archival Alley footage and interviews as Harris puts his production together in the studio.

By watching the archival clips alongside Harris’ re-creation, Alvin Alley was still in his 20s when his signature work, “Revelations,” debuted in New York City.

“Alvin Alley shifts from God of African American culture and dance to having this human element,” Harris says.

The documentary also brings to light the revolutionary idea at the time of “Black bodies doing ballet,” Harris says. “Alvin had a lot to say politically with dance. They wanted him to get out and protest, but I don’t think people got that the company itself — the Alvin Alley dance company — was a protest.”
"He’s just as important as Michael Jordan," said Tremaine Emory.

Emory was referring to Alvin Ailey, the Black activist and choreographer who founded the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1958, when Black stories weren’t being told onstage through modern dance. His name isn’t as familiar as Michael Jordan’s, but his impact is far reaching.

Ailey passed more than three decades ago, but his name still lives on through the dance company that he founded and the work he contributed. In 1960 he produced “Revelations,” a piece that tells the story of African American culture from slavery to freedom, and is still being performed by his company today.

Emory, the designer behind Denim Tears, wanted to honor that with his newest project, an apparel collection called Cry/Revelations that was produced by Champion. Emory said Champion approached him about a collaboration and he immediately knew he wanted to do something connected to Alvin Ailey.

“Dance in general is one of the highest forms of art and sports,” said Emory. “Champion is associated with all of these sports that are typically hetero and machismo sports. And I wanted to show that women, men, every part of the spectrum, the LGBTQ community, and intersexual as well are the highest level of athletes, too, the highest level of artists, too, and the highest level of creatives as well.”

Robert Battle, the Artistic Director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, says this type of partnership is the first of its kind for the group, but he was open to it because of the synergies between the stories Ailey told through dance and the stories Emory tells through his brand Denim Tears, which is best known for its denim covered in cotton wreaths that symbolize the legacy of slavery in the US.

“When I learned about Tremaine and how his work leans into that space of social justice, I thought, ‘Wow. What a symbiotic opportunity,’” said Battle. “People don’t often think of fashion as having had a history of political and social statements, and they don’t often think of dance as having that same history. So it was an opportunity to educate people, but also to put Alvin Ailey in that space of fashion and represent his influence on fashion.”

Emory said there wasn’t an Alvin Ailey apparel archive to reference, so he looked at photographs and rare books he found at Lee Kaplan’s Arcana bookstore in Los Angeles, including a book of photographs of Alvin Ailey dancers taken by Jack Mitchell in 1993. The line includes satin coach jackets featuring the American and Pan African flag, crochet tops, sweatsuits covered with photographs of Alvin Ailey dancers, trench coats influenced by Alvin Ailey’s Hobo Sapiens piece, and lots of madras. Emory said in his research he found that the madras print was an Indian fabric appropriated by European and then Western culture and he wanted to bring it back to Black and brown people.
Emory promoted the line with a short film directed by Taylour Paige and styled by Hanna Yohannz featuring Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater’s Samantha Figgins and Yannick Lebrun dancing throughout the Queens Museum. Battle said it was important to tie the clothing back to dance and show that it is a live expression and not just an artifact hanging on a wall.

Over the past couple of years, Alvin Ailey’s name has had a resurgence. A documentary directed by Jamila Wignot on Ailey’s life titled “Ailey,” was released earlier this year and is now available to rent on iTunes, and Barry Jenkins is set to direct an Alvin Ailey biopic. Battle, who says there is also an extensive exhibit in the works, is ensuring that Alvin Ailey’s legacy remains relevant to a younger generation.

“We have this whole generation of folks who didn’t grow up going to see performances in the theater, let alone seeing dance, so how could we humanize Alvin Ailey, the man, in a way that lives on people’s apparel. Because it will make people ask questions,” says Battle. “So that was really important to me that we struck a chord with the younger generation that are fashion forward.”

Emory, who signed a two-year partnership with Levi’s earlier this year, wants to continue to use his line as a way to tell stories about the Black experience.

“With Spike Lee’s Forty Acres and a Mule he told stories, he made clothing, he published books, he made documentaries, and he still does. So with Denim Tears I always see it as a mix of Forty Acres and a Mule, Willi Smith, Cross Colours, FUBU, and the sportswear brands I grew up on like Stüssy, Supreme, SIR, Union New York, and Ralph Lauren,” says Emory. “So I will continue to reference those brands and tell stories that are African diaspora centric.”
Tremaine Emory aims to incite reform from the inside out, utilizing platforms offered by giant conglomerates to recontextualize inequity and consider lingering effects of discrimination on Black America. Emory’s latest move is in alignment with sportswear giant Champion, lionizing Alvin Ailey and his legendary Dance Theater in line with the forthcoming documentary film that explores Ailey’s life and legacy.

Ailey founded his eponymous theater in 1958 as an all-Black dance troupe that performed across New York, filtering jazz and roots music through the lens of Ailey’s upbringing in rural Texas. The Theater, now a physical NY institution, deeply influenced Emory’s Champion line down to the accompanying imagery overseen by dancer and director Taylour Paige and shot at the Queens Museum. Launching in September, “Champion Tears” is a living paean to the artful exploration of Black culture in the face of inequity, a tale rooted in Emory and Ailey’s own New York experiences.

In fact, another famous Queens resident sparked Emory’s longstanding respect for Champion. "'Over the heart of Champions, C'... That excerpt from Nas’ "A Queens Story" says it all," Emory told Highsnobiety. "I saw the Champion opportunity as the perfect canvas to express the sentiment that dancers are unsung athletes and artists, combined."

Ailey's name appropriately crops up throughout the collection, printed in retro style on the front and rear of bucket hats, sweatsuits, varsity jackets, and coats, all stylistically informed by archival Champion garments. Many of the heritage styles come complete with callouts to 1958 and Ailey’s most famous work, Revelations, to further unite inspiration with execution.

Alongside loose gauge knitwear and hats executed in the red, black, and green shades of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, Emory is also reclaiming preppy staples. Here, there are plentiful cricket sweaters, beach bags, and madras plaids, the latter especially steeped in the clutches of colonialism. "Madras is an ethnic fabric that got appropriated by Western culture," Emory continued. "So, I’m taking it back."
Few dance companies are more prestigious and competitive to get into than Manhattan-based Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. So, despite years of training and confidence in the skills she’d honed, Bronx native Khalia Campbell was stunned when she was asked to join in 2018. “I cried and cried,” she says. “I was totally in shock, but I was elated and I was grateful. I think that’s the best word to describe the feeling I had — grateful. One could say that it was destined to be.” “I don’t come from a musical background, but my dad was pretty musically inclined,” Campbell says of her father, who died when she was 1. “He was a DJ and he also played the drums. He used to put his headsets around my mom’s stomach when she was pregnant with me, so I just came out being able to listen to rhythm and move to it.”

Moving to the extent that that she does — learning choreography, practicing multiple types of dance, performing onstage, and living in NYC, where walking is as fundamental as breathing — means that to Campbell, wellness isn’t a modern, faddish luxury to indulge in; it’s an essential part of her life. “To me, wellness is the quality of your health in all aspects — mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually,” she says. “And I’m big on the spiritual. I’m a believer in God.”

Ahead, Campbell shares how she takes care of her mind and body, including the vitamins she swears by, the morning routine that grounds her, and her favorite skin-care products.

On how she got into dance: I started dancing when I was about three years old, in the church. Then, when I was four, I started tap dance at the Ruth Williams studio in Harlem. As children do, I got bored and stopped for a while. But at nine, I picked tap back up and started doing ballet, African dance, gymnastics, hip-hop, everything. That’s when I really got serious, and I just knew that this was what I wanted to do. This was all at Uptown Dance Academy, and then I went to LaGuardia for high school, which is known as the Fame school. I got waitlisted at [some schools I applied to] and didn’t go to college. I started my first professional job when I was 18 in Aida, the musical, which was in Taiwan.

On how the COVID pandemic changed her approach to wellness: COVID made me more aware of how, mentally, I needed to do some self work. I realized that the way I was thinking about myself wasn’t healthy, and I needed to discover my self worth. I didn’t have dance anymore, and dance was my identity for so long. I had to figure out, Who is Khalia, the woman? Who is Khalia without dance? So there was a lot of mental and spiritual work that I had to embark on, because what I had to cover everything up — dance, being around family and friends, other distractions — I didn’t have any more. I was forced to deal with my unhealthy habits physically, too, like what I was eating. I had to ask, What am I doing to make sure that I’m as healthy as I can be? The pandemic made me much more aware of how I was treating myself.

On how she starts her morning: The timing of when I wake up ranges. I’m trying to be more intentional and disciplined and consistent when it comes to my routine, but on a regular work day, I normally wake up around 7:30 or 8 a.m. The first thing I do is my quiet time, which is talking to God. I journal, and then I open up my Bible and pray. I shower, and choose my outfit based on what dance we’re doing that day; sometimes it’s balletic, sometimes it’s something more urban. Afterward, I eat breakfast at home or get it on the way to the company. Breakfast is typically a smoothie. I love smoothies from Juice Generation — I usually get the strawberry-mango-pineapple and add ginger.

On her diet: During the pandemic I started eating meat again, which is crazy because I was pescaterian for two years. It was basically like emotional eating. I’ve gone back to not eating any chicken or beef or pork; I stick to salmon and sea bass fish. And I can’t eat too much dairy because it creates a lot of mucus in my system, and my joints get very inflamed. I take vitamins, and during the pandemic I’ve been really serious about it. I’m big on vitamin C and zinc, and my mom just put me onto sea moss. It comes in vitamin form, and has all these sea nutrients that are good for your body. My two biggest
indulgences are chips and gelato. Like I said, I typically don’t do dairy, but oh my goodness — Talenti Cookie Caramel Swirl — I could eat a whole pint in one sitting.

On how she moves: Working with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, it’s not enough to just take class. I learned this the hard way. [Laughs.] Because of the strenuous work and wide range of dance styles that we do, cross-training is a big part of the company culture. At one point I was really into Pilates and yoga. I don’t do it anymore because my training has changed, but I’ll go on YouTubes and find exercise routines to help strengthen my core, and do those. We have an amazing physical therapy team and they give us exercises to do as well, personalized for our bodies and anything we may be struggling with.

On preventing injury: The toll that dance takes on you is high if you don’t take care of your body. I have colleagues who have never had an injury in their life, and it’s because they take care of their bodies. That consists of daily visits to the physical therapist to make sure that your body is aligned, cross-training, massages, and eating foods that give you energy. We dance so much that sometimes you just want to relax and not do anything, but your body is your instrument and you have to take care of it — you only have one. And everybody is different, you know? Being aware of what your body needs and likes is important. Write it down, talk about it with a doctor; I know some dancers who do allergy tests. These are all things that help you perform to the best of your ability.

On her nighttime routine: To be honest, I don’t have one. What I typically do to wind down is just sit on the couch and watch Netflix on my laptop. [My bedtime] has been getting later and later. Right now it’s around 11, which isn’t the best. Again, I’m working on intentionality and discipline. [Laughs.]

On her favorite wellness practices: I would love to incorporate more massages into my routine — maybe once a week. Also, getting your nails and feet done is considered wellness, right? [Laughs.] I love manicures and pedicures.

On skincare: I love Origins. I use A Perfect World™ SPF 40 to moisturize my face during the day; it has white tea. At nighttime, I use the high-potency cream. I also have the daily face wash, the exfoliator, and a mask that I use once or twice a week. I’m so big on skin care. For toner, I typically use witch hazel in the morning and rose water at night. I like natural products.
What My Teacher Taught Me: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater’s Solomon Dumas on Lisa Johnson-Willingham
By: Solomon Dumas, as told to Haley Hilton
August 17, 2021

When I was in high school, my friends at The Chicago Academy for the Arts told me about Lisa Johnson-Willingham, an impressive former Ailey dancer who was teaching Horton at Joel Hall Dancers & Center on Thursday nights. I decided I ought to give her class a try.

The first time I went, I didn’t even pay for class. In fact, I don’t think I ever paid for her class. She was tough as nails, but she was always generous. The room was packed with people from all over the city. From modern dancers to professional ballet dancers to young students—everyone wanted to learn from her. Her classroom got so hot from sweaty bodies that the windows completely fogged up and contrasted the cold night outside.

In the beginning of our relationship, I was so nervous, intimidated and shy around Lisa. At the end of that first class she said, “OK, Boo! You need to point those feet and straighten those knees though.” She was always going to be honest with me. She is a very small woman who is full of knowledge and completely sure of herself. I remember she once told us, “I just had a baby and I’m doing this full-out—what’s going on with you guys?”

She was critical, but I never left feeling beaten down because she used humor to help us learn. She was a clown—a comedian who told us what we needed to improve while simultaneously making us laugh. She corrects everyone, including her assistants at the front of the room, so her students never felt that a correction was a bad thing, but something we all needed to grow. She is great at identifying every single person in the room and speaking to them in a way that they will understand. Whether it’s someone who doesn’t speak English, a child from the inner city or a bunhead of 12 years, she adapts her teaching to their needs.

At 17, I landed a musical that she was assistant-directing. She was 40 years old and six months pregnant and dancing full-out—we’re talking grands jetés! I was the youngest person in the cast, and she had my back. She would pull me off to the side and give me pointers whenever I needed help. Then, the summer after I graduated from high school, she hired me as a group leader for AileyCamp. She kind of forced me into it. She’d say, “OK, Solomon, I need you to sub for this class,” or “I need you to take over this class,” or “I need you to choreograph something for me.” She never asked if I was ready. She didn’t give me time to second-guess myself—she just trusted me with opportunities, and she’s the reason I teach today.

At each camp, she knew every child’s first and last name, and expected everyone else to as well. She often included children from foster care, and made sure everyone was treated equally, no matter their background. When I first started as a group leader, I was working with adolescents who were going through a lot. I told Lisa about one child in particular who I felt was a problem. She responded by saying, “No, they aren’t the problem, you are the problem.” I was so surprised—I thought the child needed to be reprimanded. Instead, she made the child her assistant for the rest of the camp. She got through to them by keeping them busy and giving them responsibility.

She used that same teaching tool with me and my career. After high school, I went to college at New World School of The Arts for two years, but had to drop out for financial reasons. I came home feeling like my life was completely off track. She found out what happened and called me up. She got me back in her class, and for the next six months, she nursed me back to health as her assistant. Then, when she thought I was ready, she told me it was time to get out of Chicago. She wanted me to audition for Ailey. After attending the summer program, dancing with Ailey II, and four years of dancing outside of the institution, I eventually landed a spot in the first company—an opportunity that never would have been possible without her pushing me.

Lisa always encouraged me to amplify the groundedness in my dancing. When I was a young student in her class, she told me not to change my dancing to match anyone else’s, even if the other men in the companies I aspired to were bunheads. She said, “One day, it will be something that will be celebrated.” She was right. I am not the man with crazy legs. I don’t do all the tricks. But I am passionate, and that is celebrated at Ailey. I have been given opportunities I never even dreamed I would get, and that is, in part, because of Lisa.

Today, Lisa and I both work at Ailey: I as a dancer and she as the director of Ailey Extension. She has had so many different titles within the organization: a dancer, a choreographer, the director of the arts and education summer intensives. She is able to do anything you throw in front of her. She is a mover, a shaker, a visionary. She is all the superlatives you can think of. She is Wonder Woman.
Amazing Grace – Still, We Dance: An Ode to the Deliverance and Joy of Self-Expression

By: Kibwe Chase-Marshall
September 2020 Issue

AMAZING GRACE
STILL, WE DANCE: AN ODE TO THE DELIVERANCE AND JOY OF SELF-EXPRESSION.

BY KIBWE CHASE-MARSHALL
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DANA SCHROEDER
STYLED BY MARY KATE BOYLAN
Every year, in theater and concert halls around the globe, the Alvin Alley American Dance Theater takes audiences to church. Not just any house of worship, but the working-class, Black Southern temples of racial Texas. The gospel they see and feel in Resolutions, the company’s signature dance, which has been staged more often than the trumpets’ other celebrated works, for some 25 million fans.

This year Resolutions turns 50, and it has lost none of its incantatory power. Against the backdrop of both a global pandemic that disproportionately targets communities of color and the urgency of social justice movements including Black Lives Matter, Alley’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.

Alley’s language is ascetic and vernacular, and his choreography has given generations of Black dancers a world of complex movement and emotion to inhabit,” says critic Margo Jefferson. As a young woman Debbie Allen saw Resolutions, and it was a watershed moment. “It was the permission I needed to throw away my pointe shoes and kickball-change to that which I could really express,” she tells 760C.

Two years later they were on the road, traveling through Australia and South Asia, and she would begin to cement her reputation as one of the matriarchs of an extremely exclusive club that mastered movement’s dynamic capacity for storytelling. The essence of Resolutions’ alumni reads like a who’s who of contemporary dance: Donna Wood, Sylvia Waters, the late Miguel Godreau, and Dwight Rhoades and Desmond Richardson, the founders of the elite dance company Composiciones Contemporáneas Ballet. Alley artistic director emeritus Judith Jamison says they all brought something new to their roles, as well their successors, and in that, too, is a message. “We have been and continue to be triumphal,” she says. “We have many more bridges to cross, and we will cross them.”

When a younger dancer like Campbell performs the rippling Yamaku tono undulations of the umbrella woman role made famous by Jamison, she knows she’s not just taking up a part; she’s inhabiting an iconism. Campbell’s long-legged athleticism and richly hued mahogany skin evoke Jamison’s impossibly long lines, and the younger dancer refines carrying that torch, and the responsibility of presenting Black audiences with the affirming experience of beholding Black performers. “As a Black woman living in America, I was able to relate. Resolutions talks about how we carry those burdens, but there is still hope, and that’s what allows us to persevere,” she says.

Like every major arts organization, Alley was roiled by the coronavirus crisis, forced to cut short its season and instead broadcast repertoire works and a new piece online, on social media and its Alley BFF Access Free Streaming Platform. Its annual season at New York City Center, where its house-ballet would have had pride of place this December, is on hold as of press time out of concern for the safety of both audience and performers.

Dancers, though, are an undeterred crew, and Alley’s turned their cramped apartments and sprawling yards into makeshift stages to record performances for YouTube. They are joyful and defiant and ultimately liberating, an ethos of resilience that runs through Resolutions and much of the Alley oeuvre. “Dancers don’t do this because it’s their job,” says artistic director Robert Battle. “They do it because it’s their passion; it’s the essence of who they are. So they will be creative, and we will be creative, and we will make it through this.”

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"DANCERS DON'T DO THIS BECAUSE IT'S THEIR JOB. THEY DO IT BECAUSE IT'S THEIR PASSION; IT'S THE ESSENCE OF WHO THEY ARE. SO THEY WILL BE CREATIVE, AND WE WILL BE CREATIVE, AND WE WILL MAKE IT THROUGH THIS."

— ROBERT BATTLE
Realigning for a Eurythmic Convergence

By: Gia Kourlas
March 21, 2020
Robert Battle Likes to Cook, and Connect

By: Kathryn Shattuck
August 9, 2020

“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 organizations 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 Twenties” (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 do that thing. They were very low-olarity. My mom’s friend bought me a cassette tape of her singing, and I played it until it was taped. 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 Kawai piano at home. They discovered that I had an ear for music 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 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 vegetarians or vegan. Sometimes the way she talks about it, I’m that close to trying. And then the rest 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, or me, act in a kind of guidance without her even knowing it.

6 Trying New Recipes
Cooking, it’s almost like making a dance, except nobody complains when you say, “Slate yourself into the food.” 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 relieves me and gives me some sense of control. I can’t change the pandemic, but I can certainly make a mean baked chicken with almond flour.

7 Dancers Connecting
When this whole thing went down and we came off the road, Miranda Quiroz, 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 Dancer Diaries, 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 tell you. So it’s a nice little routine 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 garden and a dog,” they would have said, “You have the wrong person. No way.” That 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.
Seeing The Dancer As Goddess

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

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 dancing is so natural as her poise, resolve and control, she has delicate, lean bone structure and flexible limbs — she is 5-foot-9 — which add to her unflinching elegance. She can be stiff; she can be yielding, but her intensity remains very rare.
An Ailey Dancer’s Goddess Quality

An article from the 1973 issue of Time magazine, focusing on Alvin Ailey and his dancers.

When Mrs. Green arrived at the company, the new dancers faced two weeks in intensive rehearsal for 10 hours a day. The process, as Ms. Green described it, was intense and demanding. "It's not just about learning the steps," she said. "It's about understanding the character, the story, the emotion." Ms. Green’s dedication and passion for the art form were evident in her interactions with the dancers. She encouraged them to push themselves, to take risks, and to explore their own emotions through dance.

Ms. Green’s influence extended far beyond the rehearsal studio. She was known for her infectious energy and her ability to inspire those around her. She believed in the power of dance to connect people, to bring them together, and to heal. She saw dance as a form of communication, a way to express the complex and often difficult emotions that are part of the human experience.

Ms. Green also recognized the importance of education and community engagement. She often brought her dancers to schools and community centers, where they performed and taught workshops. She believed that dance could be a tool for social change, a way to bring people together and to foster understanding and empathy.

As Ms. Green continued to work, she said, "Dance is not just about the physical movement, it’s about the spirit, the emotion, the story. It’s about connecting people through dance, bringing them together in a moment of shared experience." She believed in the transformative power of dance and the importance of sharing that gift with others.

Ms. Green’s legacy lives on through the work of her dancers and the continued impact of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Her dedication, passion, and commitment to dance have inspired generations of dancers and continue to shape the future of the art form.
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’s headed. Here they are: the 25 up-and-coming artists we believe are ready to take our field by storm.


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

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 locomotive, blaring the beat of the music we could make. All it took was for one song that everyone loved for us to start dancing like mad. And in all of our preoccupied 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 moonwalk, 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, and hoping for others to complete them. But more often than not simply giving 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 like myself when I dance. It’s like my favorite 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

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.”
I come from an artistic family: I'm one of four girls, and all of us (including my twin sister, Jeneil) 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.
DANCER TO DANCER
off the record

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 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. 

• Courtney Celeste Spears is a dancer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and a graduate of the Ailey/Fordham BFA program in dance.

“My disability fueled me to be the best dancer I could be.”

(Third from left)
Performing Wayne McGregor’s Mapes 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 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.
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, wailing 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 lily training for a lifetime of partly satisfying adult aesthetic experiences: nice singing but absurd story, or good acting but incomprehensible 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 Passionate Humility of Solomon Dumas

By: Gia Kourlas

December 28, 2018

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-

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. (AileyCamp — 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 be- went wherever I said to go. He never com-
plained. He may have grunted a little bit, but I didn’t pay that any attention.”

Mr. Rogers can’t say that she knew he was a dancer or an actor as a child, but re-
called 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 sea-
son continues through Sunday — his body
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 Alley, they are two of the most important and affecting dances of the year — not just at the Alley 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 premières, 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 première 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. Dumas 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 Alley school. After Mr. Dumas completed two years with Alley 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 AlleyCamp experience, he attended the Chicago Academy for the Arts as well as at the Russell Tauber 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 Alley 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 teaching classes. But there was an Alley 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 Alley 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 opened 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 — I snapped my fingers — I don't know what clicked in. She said, 'That's what I'm talking about.' She kind of broke me down.

"Mr. 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 each challenge, he said he's not one of those dancers who plans to stay in the company for 20 years. "He could," he laughed, 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 Alley 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."
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 it's 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.
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.
THE MAGIC OF REVELATIONS

BY JEN PETERS

Even today, Ailey’s masterpiece remains a powerful ode to the resilience of the human spirit.

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 routing, 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.”
THE BIRTH OF A MASTERWORK

While creating Revelations—one of his earliest works—Alley 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 journey 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," Alley described in his memoir Revelations: The Autobiography of Alvin Alley. 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 Alley, and live musicians. "The theater was packed," recalls Sylvia Waters, a former Alley II director, and current director of the Alley 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 Alley 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, Alley 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, Alley's hopeful message continues to spread. "Alvin Alley 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 Alley 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 declined!"

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 onstage and into our dressing rooms. I was about to take my eyelashes off, but the audience kept going, so Mr. Alley 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. Alley's Arts in Education & Community Programs created a children's school residency, Revelations: An Interdisciplinary Approach. Aimed at grades 6–8, the program uses Alley'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 Bucked," "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. Alley."

—JP
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

WHEN JUDITH JAMISON GOT “DEMOTED”
“The first two and a half years my favorite section was ‘Fix Me, Jesus,’ with Jimmy Truite. 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

DANCERS’ FAVORITE SECTIONS
YANNICK LEHRNEN: “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.”
November 27, 2016

Arts & Leisure
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.

By ROBERT BATTLE

I'll never forget the moment 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 "not-wannabes." 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 Studded store in Miami to buy designer-name-brand shoes, ballet slippers and me too boots. She made it a point, 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 sit in front of the television and listen to the music, and imagine what it would be like to dance. I would close my eyes and I would feel like I was dancing on the stage. It was like a dream.

But then, when I was 16, I joined the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. I was nervous at first, but I knew this was going to be my life. I was going to be a dancer.

Every day I worked hard and was determined to be accepted on the team. I practiced every day, just to get better. And that's how I became a professional dancer.

The highlight of the performance was "Revelations." It's an incredibly emotional piece, and it's something that everyone can relate to. It's a story of struggle and perseverance. And it's a story of hope.

But then, when I was 16, I joined the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. I was nervous at first, but I knew this was going to be my life. I was going to be a dancer.

Every day I worked hard and was determined to be accepted on the team. I practiced every day, just to get better. And that's how I became a professional dancer.

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

Robert Battle, the artistic director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, whose show "Revelations" is now in its 61st year, at City Center on Nov. 30.

Images were important to me, I always carry a camera with me, and I always take pictures of dance companies. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Robert Battle. There's something about the way dance moves, about the way the dancers move, about the way they move. It's like a language, a way of communicating. And it's beautiful.
In Moscow, the gospel of 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 Alley 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. Alley started the company during the civil rights movement," he said, answering a question about his sense of Alley'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 "Rocks 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.