

CULTURAL
AMBASSADOR
TO THE WORLD

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ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

AILEY II | THE AILEY SCHOOL | AILEY ARTS IN EDUCATION & COMMUNITY PROGRAMS | AILEY EXTENSION
The Joan Weill Center for Dance 405 West 55th St, New York NY 10019-4402 (212) 405-9000 AlvinAiley.org

Robert Battle, Artistic Director Matthew Rushing, Associate Artistic Director Bennett Rink, Executive Director
Alvin Ailey, Founder Judith Jamison, Artistic Director Emerita

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER ANNOUNCES PROGRAMMING FOR NEW YORK CITY CENTER SEASON DECEMBER 1 -19, 2021

Three Week Winter Engagement Features a Variety of Special Programs Celebrating a Decade of Robert Battle's Leadership, the 50th Anniversary of Alvin Ailey's *Cry* and the Artistry of Jamar Roberts in Farewell Performance After Two Decades on the Ailey Stage

#ReunitedWeDance Opening Night Gala Benefit on Wednesday, December 1

**World Premieres of Robert Battle's *For Four* and
Ailey Resident Choreographer Jamar Roberts' *Holding Space***

**Over a Dozen Dynamic Works Including the Return of Rennie Harris' *Lazarus* and
New Productions of *Pas de Duke*, *Reflections in D*, *The River* and *Unfold***

Tickets starting at \$29 go on sale October 12!

NEW YORK – August 11, 2021 — [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater](#), New York City Center's Principal Dance Company and America's beloved cultural ambassador to the world, returns to the stage for a much-anticipated annual season in their "home" theater **December 1–19, 2021**. Marking a decade of leading the Company forward, Artistic Director **Robert Battle** will present Ailey's renowned artists in a diverse repertory of premieres, new productions and Ailey classics. The repertory features two world premieres adapted from video to stage by **Robert Battle** and **Ailey Resident Choreographer Jamar Roberts** as well as **four new productions**.

"There will be much to celebrate this December as Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater returns to the stage at our New York City Center "home", reconnecting to audiences during live performances with artistry that renews our spirit of courage, hope and joy," **stated Artistic Director Robert Battle**. "I am deeply humbled to have led this seminal Company for a decade, joined by incomparable dancers and choreographers on a journey of discovery that extends from the powerful works of our founder to the important voices of today – an ongoing dance dialogue that shines a light on the resilience of the human spirit."

The season launches on **December 1 at 7pm** with a **#ReunitedWeDance Opening Night Gala Benefit** and an exciting one-night-only homecoming performance and a party at the Ziegfeld Ballroom. Proceeds support the creation of new works and Ailey's extensive educational and training programs for young people. The entire Company will appear together on the New York City Center stage to welcome back audiences in a piece d'occasion. **Clifton Brown** and talented students from **The Ailey School** will perform '**Bird**' *Lives!*, an excerpt from Alvin Ailey's dance tribute to jazz legend Charlie "Bird" Parker. The special program will feature Robert Battle's irresistible **Ella** and forward-looking **Love Stories** finale and closes with Alvin Ailey's uplifting **Revelations**, reuniting dancers and audiences to share in a live presentation of Alvin Ailey's always-inspiring masterpiece.

On Thursday, December 2 at 7:30pm the curtain goes up on the return of hip-hop innovator Rennie Harris' acclaimed [Lazarus](#), a powerful ensemble work inspired by the life and legacy of Alvin Ailey. The creation of Ailey's first two-act ballet is featured in the must-see [AILEY](#) documentary [now playing nationwide](#). Director Jamila Wignot's resonant biography is told through Ailey's own words, along with interviews of those close to him, evocative archival footage, and historic performances. *Lazarus repeats on Thursday, December 16 at 7:30pm.*

World premieres translated from dance films take center stage on Friday, December 3 at 8pm with Robert Battle's *For Four*, set to Wynton Marsalis' delicious jazz score written in 4/4 time, capturing the pent-up energy of a world cooped up during the pandemic. Ailey Resident Choreographer Jamar Roberts' [Holding Space](#) examines the ways in which we are taking care. It asks: in what ways can we collectively accommodate one another to better traverse this new and unprecedented terrain? Both pieces were created on video during the pandemic and will be seen for the first time on-stage during in-person season performances. *The New Works program repeats Thursday, December 9 at 7:30pm.*

50 Years of [Cry](#) on Saturday, December 4 at 8pm celebrates Alvin Ailey's beloved classic dedicated to "all Black women everywhere – especially our mothers." The 16-minute tour-de-force solo, created on his stunning muse, [Judith Jamison](#), was an instant sensation when it debuted on May 4, 1971 at New York City Center and went on to become an enduring work of American art. Ms. Jamison has since taught the treasured role to subsequent generations of Ailey women, such as [Jacqueline Green](#) who is seen performing the iconic work in "*Really Love*," a romantic feature film available on Netflix, August 25 about a rising Black painter who tries to break into a competitive art world set against the backdrop of a gentrifying Washington, DC. *50 Years of Cry program repeats on Wednesday, December 15 at 7:30pm.*

A Battle 10th Anniversary program is unveiled on Tuesday, December 7 at 7:30pm marking a decade of Artistic Director Robert Battle's visionary leadership that has moved the Company forward in exciting ways into a seventh decade. The program features a new production of Robert Battle's sensuous, swirling duet *Unfold*, evoking the tenderness and ecstasy in Gustave Charpentier's aria "Depuis Le Jour" sung by the incomparable Leontyne Price. The evening also includes [Mass](#), [Ella](#), [In/Side](#), [For Four](#), and [Love Stories](#) finale. *Battle 10th Anniversary program repeats on Saturday, December 11 at 8pm and Friday, December 17 at 8pm.*

A special program on **Thursday, December 9 at 7:30pm** celebrates Ailey Resident Choreographer [Jamar Roberts](#), in a farewell performance for someone who left an indelible mark as a dancer over two decades and is now making compelling dances that engage artfully with contemporary issues such as gun violence and—most recently—the devastating effect the pandemic and police misconduct have had on Black bodies and Black lives. Before leaping to the forefront of creating dance on film during the pandemic, since 2002 his dancing thrilled Ailey audiences and received rave reviews. Roberts was awarded an Outstanding Performer 2016 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." The program will feature his *Holding Space* and special performances by Roberts in Alvin Ailey's *Revelations* and other works to be announced.

Ailey & Ellington on Friday, December 10 at 8pm spotlights new productions of *Pas de Duke* and *The River* – two cherished gems from the over a dozen ballets founder Alvin Ailey created that celebrate the musical genius of the eminent American composer Duke Ellington that have become cherished Ailey classics. *Pas de Duke* was Alvin Ailey's modern dance translation of a classical pas de deux honoring two of the most renowned dancers in the world, Judith Jamison and Mikhail Baryshnikov. Originally choreographed in 1970 for American Ballet Theatre and first performed by Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1980, *The River* combines classical ballet, modern dance, and jazz in sections suggesting tumbling rapids and slow currents on a voyage to the great sea, mirroring the journey of human existence. *Ailey & Ellington repeats on Tuesday, December 14 at 7:30pm.*

All Ailey is comprised entirely of works by Alvin Ailey: [Memoria](#), a touching and powerful tribute to his mentor Joyce Trisler; a **new production** of **Reflections in D** that highlights the grace of the male dancers in a stunning, masterful expression of Duke Ellington’s composition; and **Revelations**, acclaimed as a must-see for all. *All Ailey is scheduled Wednesday, December 8 at 7:30pm and Sunday, December 12 at 3pm.*

Ailey fans will cheer returning favorites when the stage springs to life with **Aszure Barton’s** dazzling [BUSK](#), an episodic look at the nature of performance and the vulnerabilities that artists face in revealing themselves onstage and **Jawole Willa Jo Zollar’s** [Shelter](#), a gripping portrait of homelessness and displacement. *This Returning Favorites program is scheduled on Sunday, December 5 at 3pm and Saturday, December 18 at 8pm.*

Each performance (except Lazarus and Battle 10th Anniversary program) culminates with Alvin Ailey’s American masterpiece Revelations. Since its creation in 1960, *Revelations* has been seen by more audiences around the world than any other modern work, inspiring generations through its powerful storytelling and soul-stirring spirituals. Springing from Ailey’s childhood memories of growing up in the south and attending services at Mount Olive Baptist Church in Texas, *Revelations* pays homage to the rich African-American cultural heritage and explores the emotional spectrum of the human condition.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater welcomes new Company members **Lloyd A. Boyd III, Caroline T. Dartey, Ashley Kaylynn Green** and **Ashley Mayeux**. Following the New York City Center engagement, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater will dance from coast –to coast on a National Tour to over 20 cities from January – May 2021. Stops include **Washington D.C., Atlanta, Miami, Berkeley, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles** and **Newark**.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater will perform as one of the acclaimed New York dance companies in the **BAAND Together Dance Festival August 17-21 at 7:30pm** in Damrosch Park as part of Lincoln Center’s Restart Stages to champion the city’s cultural and economic revival. Made possible by CHANEL, and a project of the Arnhold Dance Innovation Fund, mixed-bill programs curated collaboratively by the Artistic Directors of and featuring the dancers of **Ballet Hispánico, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, American Ballet Theatre, New York City Ballet, and Dance Theatre of Harlem**. Free assigned seats for each evening will be made available through the TodayTix Lottery. General admission seats will be available before the show. For festival and ticketing details, please visit [here](#).

With the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ailey organization had to pivot quickly and find new ways to connect with audiences and students to continue manifesting founder Alvin Ailey’s belief that “dance came from the people and that it should always be delivered back to the people.” Ailey has been reaching out to inspire all people with [Ailey All Access](#), a series of online offerings that has brought dance to nearly 15 million people in 121 countries, including free streaming of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater repertory, original short films created by the Ailey dancers, [Ailey Extension](#) dance and fitness classes for all levels, and more. In advance of the much-anticipated return to the stage for live performances, Ailey All Access programming will return in the fall. Schedule to be announced soon.

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

Tickets starting at \$29 are on sale Tuesday, October 12 at the New York City Center box office, through CityTix® at (212) 581-1212, or at www.alvinailey.org or www.nycitycenter.org. Discount tickets are available for Ailey Super Fans who purchase tickets for more than one performance, for students with an appropriate ID, and for groups of 10 or more (discounts do not apply to \$29 tickets). For group sales, call 212-405-9082 or email groupsales@alvinailey.org. For further information about Ailey’s New York City Center season please visit www.alvinailey.org.

Opening Night Gala Benefit Sponsors:

Emily & Len Blavatnik, BNY Mellon, Daria L. & Eric J. Wallach, The Weill Family Foundation.

For Four is supported, in part, by the National Endowment for the Arts.

The creation of *Holding Space* is supported by commissioning funds from New York City Center.

Holding Space is supported by commissioning funds from Cal Performances at the University of California, Berkeley.

Holding Space is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

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

For more general information, visit www.alvinailey.org. Press materials and photos are available at pressroom.alvinailey.org.



Left to right: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in Resident Choreographer Jamar Roberts' *Holding Space* . Photo by Christopher Duggan. Artistic Director Robert Battle with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Photo by Dario Calmese; Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Jacqueline Green in Alvin Ailey's *Cry* . Photo by Paul Kolnik.

Please credit photos. [Ctrl+Click the photos for hi-res download.](#)

WORLD PREMIERES

For Four (2021 World Premiere)

Choreography by Robert Battle

Music: Wynton Marsalis

Take four amazing Ailey dancers and add in Wynton Marsalis' delicious jazz score – written in 4/4 time – and you'll understand why Robert Battle cheekily titled this exuberant short work *For Four* . Capturing the pent-up energy of a world cooped up during the pandemic, Battle expresses the drive to perform and the electricity of dancers coming together to create.

[*Holding Space*](#) (2021 World Premiere)

Choreography by Jamar Roberts

Music: Tim Hecker

Against a backdrop of civil unrest and our relentless threat upon the natural world, *Holding Space* examines the ways in which we are taking care. It asks: in what ways can we collectively accommodate one another to better traverse this new and unprecedented terrain? The work itself functions as a container, a sacred space created to give shape to, and hold, the complex emotions of this moment. At its core, it is about healing and the quest for sustainable pathways towards wholeness.

NEW PRODUCTIONS

Pas de Duke (1976 / New Production 2021)

Choreography: Alvin Ailey

Music: Duke Ellington

Pas de Duke was Alvin Ailey's modern dance translation of a classical pas de deux honoring two of the most renowned dancers in the world, Judith Jamison and Mikhail Baryshnikov and celebrating the musical genius of the late Duke Ellington (1899-1974). It was originally presented as part of the festival "Ailey Celebrates Ellington" at Lincoln Center's New York State Theater in 1976, commemorating the nation's bicentennial with America's two great art forms – modern dance and jazz music. Ailey choreographed five sections capturing the sassy sophistication of "The Duke's" jazz music: the introduction to "Such Sweet Thunder" (1957); the pas de deux to "Sonnet for Caesar" (1975); the male solo to "Sonnet for Hank Cinq" (1957); the female solo to "Unclothed Woman" (1948); and the finale to "Old Man's Blues" (1930), which captured the exuberance of the star dancers' qualities and techniques as the male and female soloists mirror each other toe-to-toe and line-for-line in this playful, good-natured competition. Robert Battle comments: "Created especially for Judith Jamison and Mikhail Baryshnikov – reigning stars at the time from parallel worlds of dance – *Pas de Duke* springs from Alvin Ailey's interest in many things when it came to dance and music, as well as his appreciation and ability to showcase great dancers. He took the ballet pas de deux formula and had a play with it, still using some of the balletic motifs but adding in elements of jazz and other forms of contemporary dance."

Reflections in D (1962 / New Production 2021)

Choreography: Alvin Ailey

Music: Duke Ellington

Alvin Ailey originally created this strong yet serene solo in 1962. The ballet is a stunning, masterful expression of Duke Ellington's composition, highlighting the power and grace of the male dancer.

The River (1970 / New Production 2021)

Choreography: Alvin Ailey

Original Score: Duke Ellington

The River is Alvin Ailey's acclaimed collaboration with the musical genius Duke Ellington, choreographed and composed in 1970 for American Ballet Theatre and first performed by Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1980. One of 14 dances Ailey created to Ellington's music, *The River* was Ellington's first symphonic score written specifically for dance. Combining classical ballet, modern dance and jazz, the suite suggests tumbling rapids and slow currents on its voyage to the great sea, mirroring the journey of life. With Ailey's mixture of light and fun yet dark and romantic choreography balanced with Ellington's score, the work is an abstract celebration of birth, life, and rebirth. Robert Battle comments: "Originally created for American Ballet Theatre, *The River* is from Alvin Ailey's unforgettable collaboration with the great American composer Duke Ellington. It shows his range as a choreographer, and certainly the versatility of the dancers. Mr. Ailey always seemed to have a passport through all the different genres of dance while still retaining his essence."

Unfold (2007/ New Production 2021)

Choreography: Robert Battle

Music: Gustave Charpentier, Recorded by Leontyne Price

Artistic Director Robert Battle's sensuous, swirling duet evokes the tenderness and ecstasy in Gustave Charpentier's aria "Depuis Le Jour" sung by the incomparable Leontyne Price. With its fluid grace, this gem exemplifies the choreographer's skill for nuanced gesture and vivid imagery.

RETURNING FAVORITES

BUSK (2009 / 2019 Company Premiere)

Choreography by Azure Barton

Music: Marcus Vinicius da Cruz de M. Morales, August Soderman, Ljova, Camille Saint-Saëns, Moondog, Daniel Belanger

In *BUSK*, internationally renowned choreographer Azure Barton invites us to enjoy the fragility, tenderness, and resilience that exist within the human experience. Set to a spirited score, *BUSK* has been described as watching the physical unfurling of the human psyche. Under Barton's direction, every facet of the dancers' bodies and minds are engaged and the complex layering of movement reveals the inherent wisdom of the body. The dancers must tap into the collective – a hive mind – in order to execute Barton's layered and intricate choreographic structures which then give way to the nuance of each individual. The audience is invited into the work and the performers – as they are – are celebrated as enough.

[Cry](#) (1971)

Choreography by Alvin Ailey

Music: Alice Coltrane, Laura Nyro, Voices of East Harlem

In 1971, Alvin Ailey choreographed the ballet *Cry*, as a birthday present for his mother on his stunning muse, the legendary Judith Jamison, who has taught the treasured role to subsequent generations of Ailey women. This physically and emotionally demanding tour-de-force 16-minute solo – dedicated to “all black women everywhere – especially our mothers” – went on to become an enduring work of American art. Made up of three parts - the first is set to Alice Coltrane’s “Something about John Coltrane,” the second to Laura Nyro’s “Been on a Train” and the last has the Voices of East Harlem singing “Right On, Be Free.”

[Lazarus](#) (2018)

Choreography by Rennie Harris

Music: Darrin Ross, Nina Simon, Terence Trent D’Arby, Michael Kiwanuka, Odetta

Inspired by the life and legacy of Mr. Ailey, hip hop choreographer Rennie Harris – the organization’s inaugural Artist-in-Residence – connects past and present in a powerful ensemble work that addresses the racial inequities America faced when Mr. Ailey founded this company in 1958 and still faces today. The Company’s first two-act ballet, *Lazarus* is set to a soundtrack produced by Darrin Ross, with his original music, and featuring Nina Simone, Terrence Trent D’Arby, Michael Kiwanuka, Odetta, spoken text written and adapted by Rennie Harris that is performed by Wadud Ahmad, Rennie Harris, as well as the voice of Alvin Ailey.

[Shelter](#) (1988 / Company Premiere 1992 / New Production 2017)

Choreography by Jawole Willa Jo Zollar

Music: Junior "Gabu" Wedderburn

Originally performed by the Ailey company in 1992, Zollar’s *Shelter* is a gripping portrait of homelessness and displacement. Set to an inventive score which incorporates drumming by Junior “Gabu” Wedderburn and poetry by Hattie Gossett and Laurie Carlos, *Shelter* delivers the compelling message that the poverty of individuals will inevitably lead to the destitution of all humanity.

SIGNATURE MASTERPIECE

[Revelations](#) (1960)

Choreography by Alvin Ailey

Music: Traditional Spirituals

More than just a popular dance work, *Revelations* has become a cultural treasure, beloved by generations of fans and acclaimed as a must-see for all. Alvin Ailey’s signature masterpiece is a tribute to his heritage. Using African-American spirituals, the work fervently explores the places of deepest grief and holiest joy in the soul. Seeing *Revelations* for the first time or the hundredth can be a transcendent experience. Audiences cheer, sing along, and dance in their seats from the opening notes of the plaintive “I Been ’Buked” to the rousing “Wade in the Water” and the triumphant finale, “Rocka My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham.”

***All Programming – Subject to Change**

Season Repertory

In addition to the premieres, new productions, and special programs, the season repertory includes:

Blues Suite – Alvin Ailey (1958)

Music: Traditional, Brother John Sellers

Ella – Robert Battle (2016)

Music: Ella Fitzgerald

In/Side – Robert Battle (2008)

Music: Nina Simone

Love Stories finale – Robert Battle(2004)

Music: Stevie Wonder

Mass – Robert Battle (2017)

Music: John Mackey

Memoria – Alvin Ailey (1970)

Music: Keith Jarrett

TICKETS ON SALE TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12 at 12 NOON ET

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater
December 1-19, 2021 at New York City Center
131 West 55th Street, between 6th and 7th Avenues, New York, NY
(212) 581-1212 / www.nycitycenter.org

CALENDAR LISTING INFORMATION

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, beloved as one of the world’s most popular dance companies, returns to the **New York City Center stage December 1–19, 2021** for a season that has become a joyous winter tradition. Led by Artistic Director Robert Battle who marks a decade of leading the Company forward, Ailey’s extraordinary dancers will move audiences with world premieres, new productions, repertory favorites and classics like the American masterpiece *Revelations*, acclaimed as a must-see for all. **Tickets starting at \$29 go on sale October 12** and can be purchased at the New York City Center Box Office, through CityTix® at (212) 581-1212 or online at www.alvinailey.org or www.nycitycenter.org. Discount tickets are available for Ailey Super Fans who purchase tickets for more than one performance, for students with an appropriate ID, and for groups of 10 or more (discounts do not apply to \$29 tickets). For group sales, call 212-405-9082 or e-mail groupsales@alvinailey.org. For further information, visit www.alvinailey.org.

Performance Times:

Opening Night Gala (December 1)	7:00pm (note earlier curtain time)
Tuesday - Thursday evenings	7:30pm
Friday & Saturday evenings	8:00pm
Sunday matinees	3:00pm

ABOUT ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

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

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