

WORLD



# Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Celebrates Golden Anniversary

Trailblazing Company Announces 18 months of special events & performances Congressional Resolution Proclaims Ailey a "vital American Cultural Ambassador to the World" Campaign to Raise Endowment to \$50 Million for 50th Anniversary Surpasses Initial Goal

New York, March 27, 2008 – Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater announced the 18-month commemoration of its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, including events, promotions, collaborations and special performances at The Joan Weill Center for Dance today. The organization also announced plans to celebrate the official anniversary date Sunday, March 30 with faith-based organizations, in honor of the spiritual heritage of founder Alvin Ailey's youth. This legacy remains at the core of the organization and its unique preservation of the African American cultural experience.

The Sunday celebrations will take place in nearly 40 churches and other faith-based organizations across New York City. Festivities include dedicating a portion of the services to honoring the Ailey legacy, with choirs singing spirituals from Alvin Ailey's masterpiece *Revelations*, and dance ministries performing works inspired by the beauty and humanity of the Ailey company. Ms. Jamison's hometown church in Philadelphia, as well as Mr. Ailey's childhood church in Rogers, Texas, will also mark the occasion.

"With the spirit and passion of Alvin Ailey in our hearts and a solid foundation for the future in our hands, we are excited to embark on 18 months of celebrations, all honoring Mr. Ailey's dream and the organization's core mission that inspires and unites people of all backgrounds through the universal language of dance," said Artistic Director Judith Jamison.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater also announced that it will enhance its traditional season of performances with special appearances at Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), and with free performances in all five boroughs of New York City. Details and images were unveiled for special commemorative merchandise with partners such as Hallmark, Mattel, Movado, Chronicle Books and Target. Additionally, the Company shared plans for its annual New York City Center performances and U.S. tour that will include exciting collaborations with noted artists Wynton Marsalis and The Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and Sweet Honey in the Rock.

Executive Director Sharon Gersten Luckman announced significant contributions that have helped the organization surpass its initial goal of raising the endowment to \$50 million for the 50th anniversary. Campaign Co-chairs Joan and Sandy Weill anchored the campaign with challenge gifts totaling \$15 million. The Weills were joined by campaign co-chairs Simin and Herb Allison. The Ailey company received major gifts of \$1 million or more from the Allisons and the following: Kathryn and Kenneth Chenault; The Ford Foundation; Guido Goldman; The Prudential Foundation; John Schaefer and Pamela Zilly; and the Judy and Fred Wilpon Family Foundation. A \$6 million pledge from Los Angeles-based dance enthusiast Glorya Kaufman pushed the endowment to \$55 million, and over its initial goal.

"The visionary leadership of Judith Jamison and the incredible support of Ailey's Board of Trustees have guided the organization to great heights," said Ms. Luckman. "We are entering this anniversary season with much to celebrate now, and as we look to the future we will continue to build our endowment – the key to the success of our performances, vital training programs and innovative Arts In Education and Community Programs."

Distinguished artist David Michalek (*Slow Dancing*, 2006) was in attendance to unveil *Goldenly*, a special video art installation of the Company's dancers, which will be on display along the ground floor windows of the 9th Avenue side of Ailey's headquarters on 55th street throughout the 50th anniversary celebration. The Company also premiered a short film, entitled *Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater at 50 — A Golden Anniversary Celebration* that commemorates the rich history of this internationally renowned dance company. Beginning with the unique and revolutionary vision of Alvin Ailey and continuing with the triumphs of the company under the directorship of Judith Jamison, this film illustrates the growth of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater from its now fabled first performance in March 1958, to the building of the largest facility dedicated to dance in the United States and its current status as America's cultural ambassador to the world.

The anniversary celebration included special performances of excerpts from Alvin Ailey's groundbreaking ballet *Blues Suite* (1958) and the acclaimed masterpiece *Revelations* (1960) with members of Alvin Ailey, Ailey II and students from The Ailey School. It was the performance of *Blues Suite* at the 92nd Street YMHA in New York City that launched the Company in 1958 and forever changed the perception of American dance.

"I have personally witnessed the universal impact that Ailey's artistry and humanity has on audiences abroad," stated Joan Weill, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, during her speech. "Sandy and I have joined the company in countries such as China, Russia and France, and the dancers never fail to inspire and proudly represent the people of the U.S. and what we're about."

Over five decades, the Ailey company has performed in 71 countries on six continents, becoming not only the most-traveled dance company in the world, but a cherished cultural ambassador. At today's launch event, this title became official, as a congressional resolution was announced calling Ailey a 'vital American Cultural

Ambassador to the World.' Representative Jerrold Nadler (NY), along with New York Senators Hillary Clinton and Charles Schumer, sponsored the resolution.

"The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is a cultural treasure not just for New York City, but for the entire country," said Rep. Nadler. "Ailey is rightfully recognized as one of the world's premier modern dance companies. I applaud them on their 50th anniversary and look forward to their continuing contributions to the world of dance."

The 18-month 50th anniversary schedule of special events, performances and commemorative merchandise includes:

# **Special Events:**

- Faith-Based Anniversary Celebration March 30, 2008: Choirs throughout the New York City boroughs will sing spiritual hymns from the Ailey company's signature work Revelations as liturgical dance groups perform in the aisles. Reverend Dr. Calvin O. Butts III will welcome acclaimed Artistic Director Judith Jamison to personally address the members of Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York City, where church youth will perform an excerpt of Revelations.
- Ailey Archive Exhibit Opens May 8, 2008 March 2009: The Library of Congress (LC), which houses "The Ailey Archives," will produce an Ailey archive exhibit. The exhibit will be on display at the LC in Washington, DC for the first five months and then at the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles starting October 4, 2008 for an additional six months.
- Free Dance Classes and Performances throughout NYC August 5 12, 2008: Ailey will host a series of free performances and dance classes in all five boroughs of NYC, sponsored by Bloomberg.
- Golden Anniversary Gala at New York City Center December 3, 2008: To kick off the New York City Center Season, Ailey will host a special star-studded Opening Night Gala with Honorary Chair and Honored Guest, Oprah Winfrey. At the Gala, Ailey's female dancers will wear a special collection of custom gowns designed for the occasion by acclaimed fashion designers Badgley Mischka.
- Target 1958 Night December 2008: In honor of Ailey's first performance, Target will sponsor a one-night-only performance during the New York City Center season, featuring specially priced tickets to help encourage access and participation.
- Ailey Film Day with The Film Society of Lincoln Center February 1, 2009: The Film Society of Lincoln Center will present an Ailey film retrospective: an entire day of Ailey films, including discussions with Judith Jamison, Sylvia Waters and documentary filmmaker Orlando Bagwell. In addition, the Film Society will display a collection of Ailey posters at the Walter Reade Gallery throughout the entire month of February.

# **Performances:**

- The North American 50th Anniversary Tour March 28, 2008 May 18, 2009
- **Spring Season at BAM,** *June 3-8, 2008:* For the first time in 38 years, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater will perform a weeklong engagement at BAM, presented by The Joyce Theater.

- The 50th Anniversary International Tour September 7 October 19th, 2008
- The 50th Anniversary New York City Center Season December 3, 2008 January 4, 2009: A dynamic series of world premieres and new productions will be presented throughout the New York, North American and international '08-'09 tour seasons, including:
  - A new work in collaboration with renowned a cappella group Sweet Honey
    In the Rock, who will perform live on stage with the dancers at New York
    City Center and in many North American tour cities sponsored by MetLife
    Foundation.
  - O A world premiere by **Mauro Bigonzetti**, one of Europe's most inventive choreographers, with a score by **Stefano Bollani**, a renowned Italian composer and jazz pianist
  - Major new productions of works from the brilliant collaboration between Alvin Ailey and Duke Ellington, featuring live performances by Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra at New York City Center

### Commemorative Merchandise:

- Hallmark greeting cards *On Sale March 2008*: A series of six cards featuring photographs of Ailey dancers by Andrew Eccles
- Ailey/Celebration Calendar On Sale July 2008: 2009 Ailey calendar with photos from the Ailey Ascending: A Portrait in Motion book
- Alvin Ailey Barbie® Doll *On Sale* November 2008: Designed by Judith Jamison, the doll represents a dancer from Alvin Ailey's Revelations
- Ailey Ascending: A Portrait in Motion Photography Book On Sale November 2008: The commemorative photographic art book will feature all-new photographs of the Company by acclaimed photographer Andrew Eccles. The book will span the whole of the Ailey experience and include breathtaking, never-before-seen photographs of the Ailey company, including photographs of performances, behind-the-scenes activities, and stunning portraiture of the Ailey dancers, all shot specifically for the book by Eccles.
- Movado Museum Dial Timepiece On Sale December 2008: In celebration of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's 50th anniversary, Movado will issue a commemorative Museum Dial watch exhibiting the precision and artistry that the Ailey dancers have demonstrated over the last 50 years. Movado is also providing major support for a new production of Alvin Ailey's Blues Suite, his classic work that originally premiered on March 30,1958 and marked the birth of the Ailey company.
- A Young Ailey Dancer Book On Sale Spring 2009: The book by Valerie Gladstone and Jose Ivey vividly portrays the world of a student at The Ailey School through words and pictures.

Major support for the underwriting of Ailey's 50th Anniversary Launch Event provided by The Wachovia Foundation. Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation gratefully acknowledges the following supporters of Ailey's special initiatives and events during the 50th Anniversary: Bloomberg, Citi, Target, MetLife Foundation, Movado, The Booth Ferris Foundation and Diageo. The Ailey organization extends its sincere appreciation to:

Prudential, Time Warner, New York State Council on the Arts, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and National Endowment for the Arts.

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# About Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater grew from the 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 more than 21 million people on six continents, earning a reputation as the most acclaimed international ambassador of American culture. Fifty years later, the Company continues the legacy of founder Alvin Ailey and the remarkable vision of Artistic Director Judith Jamison – promoting the uniqueness of the African American cultural experience and the preservation and enrichment of the American modern dance heritage. Beauty, spirit, hope and passion know no bounds. That is the power of Ailey.

For more information on Ailey and the Company's 50th anniversary, please visit www.alvinailey.org.

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