

# my wednesday

The Detroit News  
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Wayne E. Smith / The Detroit News

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Photos by Brandy Baker / The Detroit News

**MICHAIAH MOON** has dreams of attending the Juilliard School in New York City. The 16-year-old says she is a fan of Alvin Ailey's exciting choreography. "The movement, the music – it doesn't bore you, ever!" says the Detroit International Academy 11th-grader. "Whatever criticism the instructors have to offer, I will take it constructively. There is so much bad going on in Detroit and problems in our schools. For them to come to Detroit, to this school, is like a relief."

# Dancing with the stars



Alvin Ailey's **NASHA THOMAS-SCHMITT** says projects like "Revelations" help expose youths to the arts, and in doing so also help the arts. "We are cultural ambassadors. We hope to foster future audiences for the arts," says Thomas-Schmitt.



# Alvin Ailey troupe thrills local teens with whirl of a lifetime

By URSULA WATSON | *The Detroit News*



Teaching artist **DARIUS DAMAZI WILLIAMS** runs the students through moves from "Revelations." Teaching is a way of giving back and being a role model, he says. "It is a huge responsibility for me. I am a mentor, a big brother, a surrogate father." **SIMONE CHANEY**, 17, far left, aspires to become a dancer. The 12th-grader was overjoyed when she learned that Alvin Ailey was coming to her school. "It is overwhelming that this is actually happening. President Obama, now this! Are you kidding? It is unbelievable!"

## Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

7:30 p.m. Feb. 12-13, 2:30 and 7:30 p.m. Feb. 14, 2:30 p.m. Feb. 15

Sweet Honey in the Rock will join the 7:30 p.m. performance on Feb. 14  
The Detroit Opera House  
1526 Broadway St.,  
Detroit

Tickets \$29-\$96

Call (313) 237-7464 or visit [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com)



**LOLITA REESE** got off work early as a security officer to watch her daughter Jillynn Reese, 16, participate in the first day of the program. Alvin Ailey's Nasha Thomas-Schmitt invited Reese to show off her dance skills during a short dance warm-up.

**T**he Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater celebrates its 50th anniversary continuing to do what it has always done — be a source of inspiration.

The dance company was founded in 1958 by the pioneering choreographer and dancer Alvin Ailey, who died 1989. Ailey believed dance came from the people and should be given back to the people. Alvin Ailey Arts in Education & Community Programs carry on his vision, reaching back to the community with projects such as Revelations: An Interdisciplinary Approach, in which dancers go into schools to teach the legendary Ailey dance piece "Revelations" while touting the importance of language arts and social studies.

Alvin Ailey Arts representatives have been conducting the program at the Detroit International Academy since Jan. 26, and will be there until Friday. The program is sponsored by a grant from JPMorgan Chase. Detroit International Academy is an all-girl, college-prep school nestled between the hulking structure of Northern High School and the historic Little Rock Baptist Church on Woodward Avenue. With a school district and city burdened with various woes, the staff, students and parents see the presence of Alvin Ailey as an invaluable, uplifting experience.

On the first day, Academy dance teacher Heidi Smith beamed as she watched her students take direction under the watchful gaze of Nasha Thomas-Schmitt, co-director of the Arts in Education and Community Programs and national director of AileyCamp. Thomas-Schmitt was joined by Ailey teaching artists Theara Ward and Darius Damazi Williams.

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Watch video of Alvin Ailey instructors at the Detroit International Academy at [detnews.com/entertainment](http://detnews.com/entertainment).