



## Alvin Ailey's Masterpiece 'Revelations' Back On Tour

By Hollie McKay  
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In January 1960 choreographer Alvin Ailey revolutionized modern dance, fusing music, movement, Christianity and the pains of the turbulent political atmosphere into a three-part work.

The late choreographer's masterpiece "Revelations" spoke of the African-American journey from slavery to freedom, the fight for equality, and the universal emotions of repression, love, fear and joy.

Now five decades later, the signature piece is being celebrated by the famous New York-based Alvin Ailey Dance Company in a special 2011 honorary tour.

"'Revelations' had such an impact not just on this company, but the world. We're celebrating that, society is getting older and older, but the work is still so relevant. Alvin's choreography is very simplistic, for him it was all about the human experience – laughing, praying, getting dressed for Sunday Church," dancer Rachael McLaren told FOX411's Pop Tarts column while on a rehearsal break in Los Angeles this week. "He takes very simplistic human emotions and puts them to music."

Yet "Revelations" isn't purely a deep, heart wrenching dance work. There is plenty of opportunity for audience members to join in and bust a few moves themselves as the dancers (well, the professional ones) transition from an apex of poses in "Fix Me, Jesus" to the upbeat and boppin' gospel church session, "Move, Members, Move!"

"Most people are stomping their feet and clapping, we can feel the energy from the audience. The energy is really reciprocated," McLaren continued. "People are usually just in awe – the bodies on the stage, the undulating movement, the fabric in the background. It is just very striking."

Speaking of the dancers' bodies, at least in this company, a Natalie Portman "Black Swan"-style/bone-protruding physique is far from mandatory or encouraged.

"Dance companies have a stigma where dancers can't eat or have to restrict their diets but we're all very healthy and try to have healthy diets," McLaren said. "Of course we all have to keep on top of ourselves, but it is not about having a skinny body. It's about being strong, and what you're willing to share as a dancer and ultimately as a human being."

And in a town known for its movies-only approach, Ailey's company has (somewhat surprisingly) been embraced by Angelenos over recent years, which is why they are currently back in Southern California performing a vast new repertoire at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion as part of their North American tour.

"(Hollywood) has hesitancy towards live performances, but people here are starting to see it as very social and shared experience," explained Renae Williams Niles, Director of Dance Presentations at the Music Center in Los Angeles. "There is a real love of Ailey, it's such an illustration of the human spirit. It seems to even attract those, who in the past, have said they didn't like dance."

And while the vision of beautiful bodies twisting and turning on the stage may appear effortless to the naked eye, this definitely isn't a job for the faint-hearted.

"When we're in New York we usually have a warm-up class from 10:30am, then we rehearse from 12 to 7 with an hour of lunch, so it is really full-time. When we're on tour we may have mini performances in the morning, rehearsals all day and a performance in the evening," McLaren added. "It is hard work, but it is so rewarding when you think about the impact this company has had. There was a lot of good in our founder, he (Ailey) was just one man with a simple idea and it snowballed into something that continues to touch so many people."