

Alvin Ailey's Jacqueline Green on Her Dancing Dream

Already a professional at age 23, Alvin Ailey's Jacqueline Green tells us about what drives her dancing, and how she got to live her dream.

By Maura Brannigan

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Marie Claire: You joined Alvin Ailey in 2011 and grew up in Baltimore. How did you fall in love with dance?

Jacqueline Green: My mother is the reason I started dancing and the reason I kept dancing. I went to the Baltimore School for the Arts. People know it as the school that Jada Pinkett Smith and Tupac Shakur went to. I had another choice in mind but my mother said, 'This art school has a really good academics, but you just have to get in with an art.' I said, 'Really? An art school? What would I audition for? I'm really just regular.' She said, 'Well, you're flexible. So go ahead and try out for dance.' I auditioned for the school with no training. I found a leotard and picked up some tights from the store and got some regular ballet slippers from a *Payless* or something.

MC: Did anyone inspire you?

JG: Once I was in school, I remember my second year dancing, one of the alumni came back. Her name is Linda Denise Fisher Harrell. She was a former principle dancer with Alvin Ailey, the company. She was a woman of color doing ballet. She was really one of the first people to influence me and inspire me. Then I came to New York for college and completed the B.F.A. program with Ailey and Fordham so I could have my college experience and continue to dance.

MC: What is it like being a professional dancer at such a young age?

JG: My high school was a performing arts school. When they accept you, they train you to be a professional from the day you walk in. They teach you everything you should expect in the dance world. They kind of instilled that professionalism in us. I came here to New York and I did what I had to do as far as my schoolwork and learning what I could from dance. I felt like a professional as a student. When you get into a company, it's really on you. You develop different muscles. That performance quality, I really learned my first year dancing as a professional dancer. I think I am still the youngest girl in the company. Everyone has a little more experience than I do and some have a lot more. I can really learn from them as well.

MC: I understand that costumes are a huge part of the performance for every dancer. Have you adopted anything from your stage costumes into your daily life?

JG: I like to spice up my wardrobe—I have my signature pieces. I'm always the girl on the first day of rehearsal on tour, I'll bring out my 80s tights they are red and blue and yellow. Everyone is like, 'Oh my gosh. There she goes with the tights again.' But I like it because it distracts everyone from being complacent in the rehearsal setting. It's always during Christmas time. We'll have class on Christmas day and I'll have Christmas ornaments hanging from my ears or reindeer antlers on my head with bells.

Alvin Ailey's tours around the country. The company's New York City Center 2013-2014 season begins on Dec. 4. [To purchase tickets, click here.](#)