

What My Teacher Taught Me

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Masazumi Chaya

AAADT associate artistic director Masazumi Chaya had quite a bit of catching up to do when he moved to the United States from Japan. He had studied Vaganova technique exclusively before moving to New York, where he encountered Benjamin Harkavy and discovered ballet in an entirely new way.



"Benjamin was a 20th-century teacher who taught powerful positions--it wasn't quite so romantic as what I was used to. I didn't have fantastic turnout or extension, but if I did my best in class, he noticed and told me so, which made me want to try even harder the next day. I was used to a strict atmosphere in Japan, but Benjamin made dancing fun. With him, it was more than just taking class. I developed a new understanding of dance."

We're giving away a pair of tickets to Ailey's December 24 performance as part of [their New York City Center run!](#) Scroll down to enter.



Photos from top: by Lois Greenfield; by Andrew Eccles, both courtesy of AAADT