

November 19, 2015

FIRST PERSON

Stepping into the Dream

Alvin Ailey dancer Chalvar Monteiro



At age 12, Montclair's Chalvar Monteiro knew he could move really well. But when he went to see the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Company at NIPAC on Mother's Day, his life was transformed. He started training at Sharron Miller's Academy for the Performing Arts in Montclair, and studied dance during the summer at the Ailey School in New York. After earning his BFA in Dance from SUNY Purchase, he performed with numerous professional dance companies, most recently [Abraham.In.Motion](#). Thirteen years after his revelatory experience at NIPAC, he is a new member of Alvin Ailey, and will perform with them at New York City Center from Dec. 2 – Jan. 3.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

At Sharron Miller's, I was comfortable. I knew what I had to do, and what I needed to work on. I learned how to become a well-rounded human being who treated people with respect and understood discipline. I took what I learned there and capitalized on it at Ailey School, where the competitive environment forced me to concentrate on so much more, and I became a young professional. Dance has given me the platform to become bigger than myself – to be part of a big picture.

AT HOME AT ALVIN AILEY

I don't see myself being anywhere else. I just see myself growing and having a home here, instead of jumping from company to company. I want to be able to take the time to figure out who I am, and what I have to offer the dance world and

the world at large. Right now, I prefer the stage. Years from now, I wouldn't be opposed to working behind the scenes directing productions, though I'll most likely teach.

THE OLD HOMETOWN

I left Montclair for New York less than a year ago to pursue Ailey full-time, but my family lives in Montclair so I always visit, especially when I'm home from a tour. I still choreograph and teach class at Sharron Miller's when their schedule allows me to, and I'm trying to figure out how to get more involved with teaching in public schools. I like how quiet Montclair is. It's very busy, but it still has a suburban, homey feel. ■

— AS TOLD TO DANIELLE BENNETT

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER. PHOTOS BY ANDREW ECCLES