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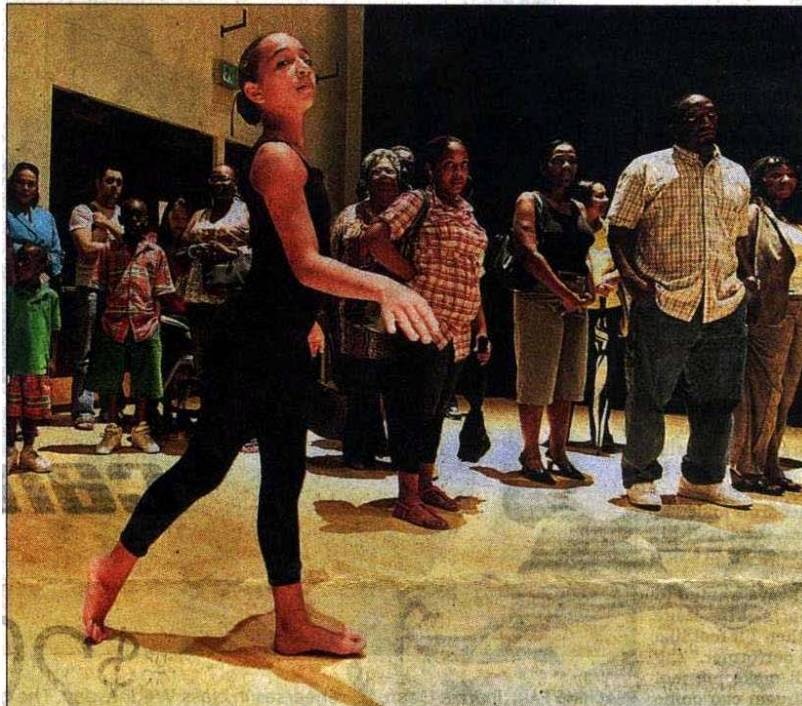
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LOCAL & STATE

ADRIENNE ARSHT CENTER | AILEYCAMP



PHOTOS BY AL DIAZ/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

HOPES: Jeanelle Roman, 13, practicing in front of parents, has her hopes set on the AileyCamp's Aug. 8 performance at the John S. and James L. Knight Concert Hall.

BIG STAGE LESSONS

■ Dozens of kids from across Miami-Dade are learning to express themselves through dance this summer at a camp taught by one of the nation's top dance companies.

BY JOSE PAGLIERY
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The tapping sound of nearly two dozen pairs of feet echoed on Wednesday through a studio inside the Adrienne Arsht Performing Arts Center, as teenage dancers in black leotards jumped and pivoted across the dimly lit wooden floor.

They held their backs straight, with arms out, as a modern dance instructor from the famed Alvin Ailey Dance Company looked on.

"Single, single, double, let down, half-turn, half-turn," Lutricia Walters shouted, her



MOTIVATED:

AileyCamp aims to empower kids to pursue their dreams. Here, Juanita Anderson, Adrianna Herrera and Stephana Tobbaji, all 12, share a laugh.

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voice carrying above the rhythmic mix that played.

For the 80 Miami-Dade County kids chosen to take part in the center's first summer dance program, Ailey-

Camp, the focused classes are a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The ballet, jazz, modern and West African dance classes are taught by some of the nation's best.

And they're free, which puts Stephanie Carballo's

• TURN TO DANCE, 2B

Kids learn of life, dreams through dance camp

*DANCE, FROM 1B

unemployed and struggling mother at ease.

Lucia Carballo joined dozens of parents in June when she turned in applications for two of her daughters to take part in the scholarship-based program for at-risk children in 11 cities nationwide. All three were thrilled when both 13-year-olds, Stephanie and Doneisha, made it past the interviews and were chosen.

Since the start of the program in mid-July, both girls have twirled their way through their dining room every afternoon, proudly showing their mother what they've learned at the camp. But there are parts of the curriculum that don't manifest themselves physically or immediately — classes aimed at developing self-esteem and discipline — where students discuss independent thought, peer pressure, sexual awareness and avoiding drug use.

AileyCamp's national director, Nasha Thomas-Schmitt, hopes those les-

sons leave the deepest impressions.

"I want them to be able to grow up and say, 'This is what I want to do, this is what I like to do, and I'll find the means to do it,'" she said.

During the four-weeks inside the center, a gleaming sign of art and intellect surrounded by a neighborhood that receives much less glamour and attention, children who felt they had no shot at success are experiencing a change of heart.

Jeanelle Roman, a 13-year-old middle school student with eight years of dance behind her, has her hopes set on the camp's final performance Aug. 8, when the group will dance on the large stage of the John S. and James L. Knight Concert Hall.

With her arms folded in front of her, the 4-foot-10-inch dancer spoke in a soft yet firm voice.

"I've always wanted to dance on a big stage because then I'll feel like I'm a real performer," she said. "It'll make me feel like my dream can come true."



AL DIAZ/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

REACHING FAR: Jhamia Dean, 12, rehearses in class Wednesday. The ballet, jazz, modern and West African dance classes are taught by some of the instructors from the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation.