

Sunday, July 12, 2009

Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey AileyCamp Free Final Performance

Tyrone Aiken, Executive Director of the Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey (KCFAA), presents the Final Performance of the 2009 AileyCamp students.

Kansas City, MO - infoZine - "These kids have put in an extraordinary amount of work and dedication into their classes and in preparation for this Final Performance," said Mr. Aiken. "AileyCamp is where the spirit of Alvin Ailey really comes alive – with the students. The vision of Alvin Ailey, founder of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, has been furthered by the work we do here and the artistic leadership of Judith Jameson." Personally appointed by Alvin Ailey, Artistic Director Judith Jameson is celebrating her 20th anniversary this year.

The innovative six-week AileyCamp is open to middle-school students, and consists of dance classes in jazz, tap, modern and ballet. The classes are taught by professional faculty from around the country, using the original curriculum created in 1989 with the support of Denise Jefferson, Director of The Ailey School in New York City. Many of the Group Leaders were once AileyCampers themselves.

"The instructors are relevant role models who nurture and assist in the development of the whole child," said Mr. Aiken. "Students are encouraged to not only develop their artistic interests, but also to address their academic, social and domestic challenges."

Additional workshops in creative writing, percussion, and personal development complement the dance classes. Throughout the summer, students explore their creativity, learn to master their bodies, foster critical-thinking skills and strengthen their respect for themselves and others. Community service activities and field trips and family events round out the experience for the Ailey Campers.

The Final Performance will showcase the youngsters' accomplishments in ballet, modern, jazz, tap, percussion and creative writing.

The public is cordially invited to attend this free performance. It will be held on Wednesday, July 15th, at 7:00pm at the Lyric Theatre, 1029 Central Street, in Kansas City, Missouri. Admission is free, and families are encouraged to attend.

EdLI

Joie Tyrrell handles Long Island's K-12, while Karla Schuster has the latest hubbub on the college front.

Alvin Ailey Dancers

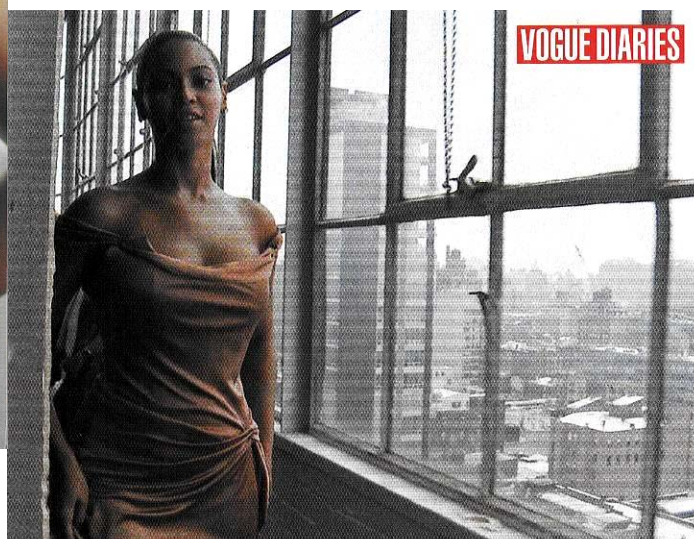
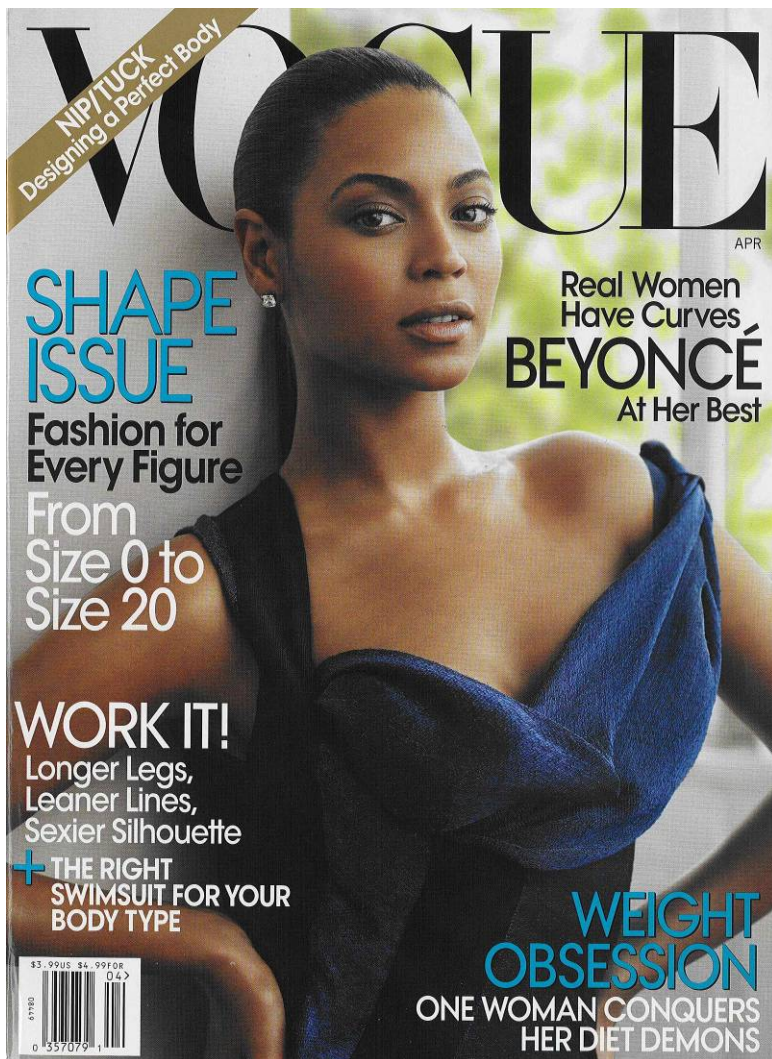


Posted by Joie Tyrrell on May 19, 2009 10:54 AM |

Amityville's Park Avenue Memorial Elementary School was filled with the sights and sounds of rhythm and beats when professional dancers from the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center, located in Brooklyn, New York, came to engage and expose students to the art of dance. Committed to bringing dance into classrooms and communities throughout the world, Ailey Arts-In-Education & Community Outreach Programs include special performances, lecture-demonstrations, technique classes and curriculum-based lessons, with the goal of making dance accessible to young people through diverse dance training and innovative programs.

Park Avenue students began their training with the Alvin Ailey dancers by working in small groups and choosing a poem of interest to build teamwork skills. One student was designated to read the poem aloud, while the other group members visually expressed its meaning creating movement to the words of the poem.

During the lessons, students were exposed to a variety of techniques and genres of dance including ballet, jazz, modern, hip-hop and West African dance. Instructional pieces were combined and put to music, creating a complete student-dance performance. Students also had the unique opportunity to visit the Alvin Ailey School and view a performance from the professionals who taught and guided them. Students understood the cultural and historical significance of the dance theatre's production and were amazed at the discipline and athleticism the dancers exhibited.



VIDEO: BEYONCÉ KNOWLES

Joined by a troupe of young dancers from one of Alvin Ailey's community programs, superstar Beyoncé poses for Mario Testino for the April issue and talks to us about the importance of body confidence, her five-year plan, and the emotional performance she gave for the new president of the United States.

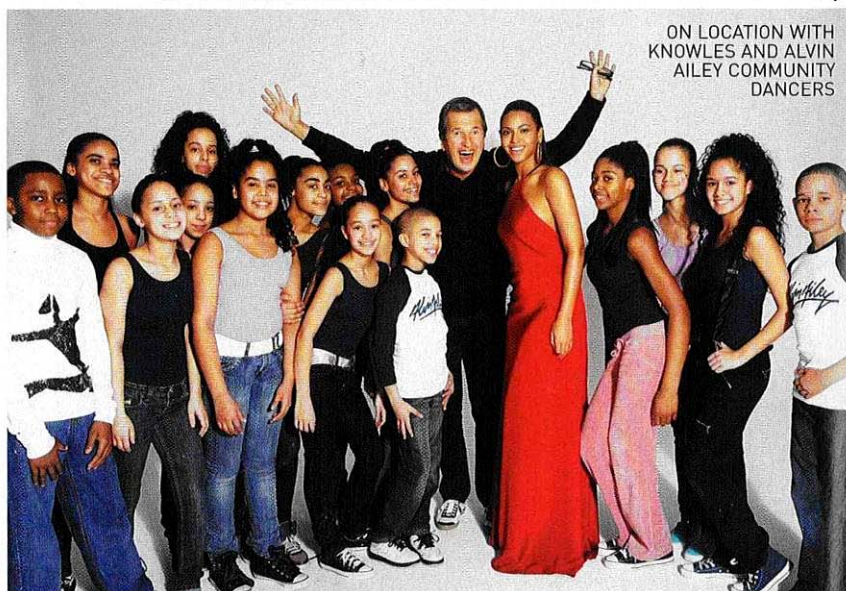
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PHOTOGRAPHER

MARIO TESTINO

"The highlight of watching Beyoncé and the kids from the Alvin Ailey community dance program perform together to her songs was realizing how iconic she has become"

PHOTOGRAPHS BEYONCÉ KNOWLES
("FIERCE CREATURE," PAGE 214)





DYNAMITE
SHAPE

WINNING STREAK
"Her star quality is just so immediately obvious," says Hugh Jackman. Juan Carlos Obando blocked silk dress. Fashion Editor: Tonne Goodman.

fierce creature

Catching up with Beyoncé before her world tour (in between gigs at the Inauguration and the Oscars), Jonathan Van Meter discovers why the superstar never slows down—she's unstoppable.
Photographed by Mario Testino.

VOGUE

febuary has barely begun, and Beyoncé is already having the biggest year of her life. Just a couple of weeks after her historic, indelible star turn at the presidential Inauguration, she has found herself, yet again, at the center of another worldwide television event with an unfathomably huge audience: the Oscars. Although she is in the midst of a grueling schedule of her own—preparing for a world

tour that kicks off this month—she has somehow found time to rehearse for what might be the most challenging performance of her career: a high-wire act that essentially packs the history of the movie musical into five minutes of showstopping song and dance. Opposite Hugh Jackman (gulp). Live.

The weekend before the telecast, Hollywood's ultimate showman, Baz Luhrmann, who is directing this big, pizzazzy number, calls me in between rehearsals. "At some point," he says, "as Hugh was inventing his own little musical out of many famous musicals, he realized he needed a leading lady. The question became: Who could that be? Who can sing and dance *and* act? It's a fairly rare combination." Enter Beyoncé.

"There are many people who have powerful voices," says Luhrmann, "and then there are rare stars—whether it's a Streisand or a Louis Armstrong or a Maria Callas—whose voice is recognizable no matter what the material. That's what makes a great musical star: They put their imprint on anything they're given. Beyoncé absolutely has that." He pauses for a moment, and then for good measure adds one last piece of high-flying praise: "And as a dancer, there's not a step you can give her that she can't pick up."

If her director is suitably impressed, her costar is positively giddy. "Just watching how she processes everything, she's so fast," says Jackman. "She'd never heard the song 'Top Hat,' and she just listened to it once, and she was sort of humming along with it, and then she heard it another time, and then she just sang it like it had never been sung before, in a way that was so sultry and soulful and sexy and engaging. You thought to yourself, This is the best version of this song I've ever heard. I just found myself going, 'Oh, my God, I want to do movies with this girl. I want to do a movie musical!'"

When Beyoncé finally appeared out of the darkness at the top of the stairs on Oscar night—every inch the showgirl in red sequins and top hat—she looked fabulous and sounded even better. The whole number was classic Baz Luhrmann: pastiche stirred into happy chaos. But it did make me long to hear Beyoncé sing whole versions of some of those songs, from "Over the Rainbow" to "You're the One That I Want."

Could there be a full-length Luhrmann-directed Knowles-

ELECTRIC COMPANY

"The amount of influence I have on these young girls is scary sometimes. But I also understand how lucky I am to have that," says Beyoncé, photographed here with a troupe of dancers from an Alvin Ailey community program. Juan Carlos Obando cherry silk asymmetrical dress. Ofira earrings. Details, see In This Issue.



Jackman movie musical in the future? "One can only pray," says Luhrmann. "My mind is racing already."

For now, however, Beyoncé has more pressing concerns. It's one of those spooky-dark early-February nights, and she's been holed up for hours in a vast, musty, windowless studio space on Manhattan's far West Side. Sitting on a barstool facing her ten-piece all-female band, she is wearing her rehearsal uniform: a skintight black bodysuit with a long, clingy, cream-colored knit T-shirt and what she calls "mega-pumps"—black YSL platform stilettos. Her long hair is pulled back off her face with a pair of sunglasses, and her shiny silver-metallic manicure makes it seem as if she has ten tiny mirrors glued to the ends of her fingers.

She and her band—all the single ladies, indeed—are just one week into rehearsing for the tour, which kicks off this month in Edmonton, Canada, but they sound surprisingly tight already. They are still in what Beyoncé refers to as the "play" phase. At one point, the pianist begins the quiet, pretty Sarah McLachlan ballad "Angel," and Beyoncé sings the song exactly as it was originally recorded—a kind of vocal drag that she is very good at. Suddenly, the keyboard player starts banging out her part as if she were in a black church in the deep South. Beyoncé starts belting to the heavens, testifying from her barstool. Before long the whole band falls out laughing—wooo, child!

It has been a very long day—though the end is not even close for Beyoncé, who is now flopped down next to me on a black leather sofa. "My mind is on overload," she says, and that is about as big a complaint as you will ever hear out of a girl who defines the word *trouper*. She got up at the crack of dawn in the Tribeca loft she shares with Jay-Z (whom she finally married last April after a six-year courtship), ate a tiny portion of Honey Nut Cheerios, ran six miles, and then worked out with her trainer, who had her in every imaginable kind of squat to get her ready to fit into her no doubt skintight Thierry Mugler-designed tour costumes. Then she went to a dance rehearsal for a couple of hours before showing up here. Now she will sit for a meeting with her management, scarf down several bites of a salad with

jalapeños and avocado ("so that it tastes like something that's bad for you"), do this interview, and then rejoin the dance rehearsal until late into the night. "And then I have to go home and be a wife!" she says, laughing.

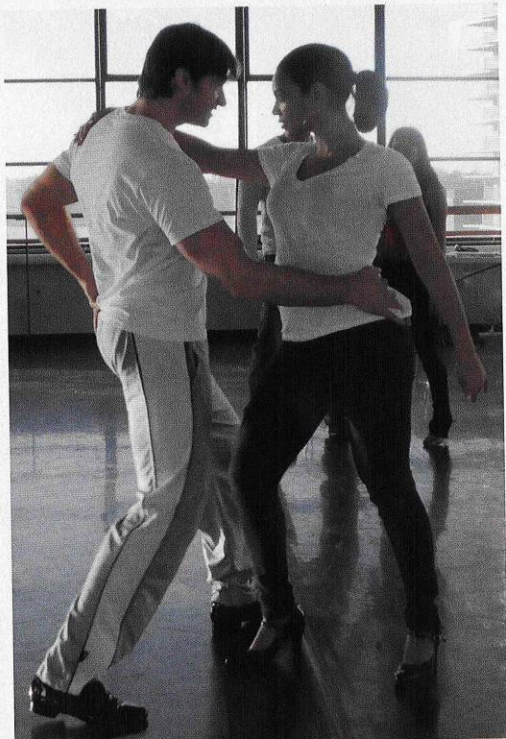
It is just two weeks since Beyoncé sang the Etta James classic "At Last" to Barack Obama and his wife on the evening of January 20, as they danced for the first time as president and First Lady and gave the entire nation a collective lump in its throat. There was something about the look on Beyoncé's face, the way she herself seemed as if she might start to cry as her voice—suddenly so adult, so elegant—glided effortlessly through the standard, that made everyone grow quiet.

Her composure brought to the surface the reality of what had happened: We had elected a black man to be president of the United States. By the time the song was over, Beyoncé had become not just part of a historical moment but the perfect symbol of it.

Watching her that night reminded me of something she said three years ago, when I interviewed her for the release of *Dreamgirls*. I asked her if she had ever experienced any of the racism in the music business that is depicted in that film, and she said, "In some ways but only slightly. My father had to fight those battles. I didn't. And now I'm large enough—I'm universal—that no one's paying attention to what race I am. I've kind of proven myself. I'm past that." I remember feeling a real charge when she said it; I was both sure that it was true for her and shocked that a 24-year-old black girl from Houston had the nerve to say such a thing. But on the night of the Inauguration it be-

came patently obvious that what she said three years earlier had finally become true for all of us, not just for her.

A few days later, Beyoncé tells me, she called Michelle Obama to thank her for the opportunity. "She told me she was very happy that her girls have someone like me to look up to," says Beyoncé. "And I'm like, 'Oh, my God.' You have to feel fortunate to be one of the people whom parents don't mind their children looking up to. The older I get, the more I think about the amount of influence I have on these young girls, and it's scary sometimes. But I also understand how lucky I am to have that."



GOTTA DANCE

Beyoncé and Jackman, rehearsing for their Oscar performance, photographed by Baz Luhrmann in New York.

BOLD PRESENCE

"I think of Beyoncé as a modern-day warrior," says Thierry Mugler, who designed the costumes for her upcoming tour: Bottega Veneta black silk-crepe dress. Details, see In This Issue.

BEAUTY NOTE

Light show: L'Oréal's Skin Genesis Deep Purifying Foaming Cream Cleanser contains clay and polishing microbeads for radiant, smooth skin.

"Beyoncé is an evolving, complicated young woman who is going to surprise some people who think they have her pegged"



A week earlier I got to witness the influence she has on her young fans. A group of about fifteen middle school students from Washington Heights—many of them looking like Beyoncé, with long, straight hair pulled back in ponytails and arched eyebrows—had been brought in to be photographed with the singer for this story. Participants in an Alvin Ailey dance program, they had not been told that it was for *Vogue* or that they were about to meet the star. As the kids are being put through their paces by a choreographer, Beyoncé makes a surprise entrance in a full-length purple gown. It slowly dawns on them that Beyoncé is standing right in front of them, and their faces are like little contained explosions. One of the only boys, Chris, actually fans his face with his hands as if he is about to faint.

"Wow, y'all are beautiful," says Beyoncé. "Did y'all know what this is for?"

"Nooooo!" they shout in unison. "What did they tell you?" asks Beyoncé.

"They said it was going to be somebody famous," says one of the kids.

"Who did you think it was going to be?"

"Tyra!" someone shouts, and everyone cracks up.

Three of the oldest girls do the now-ubiquitous "Single Ladies" dance for Beyoncé. Another group of girls steps up to show her a number they have been working on. "What song do you do it to?" she asks, and someone says, "Break the Ice." "Who's that by?" When someone yells out "Britney!" you can practically hear the imaginary sound of a needle being dragged across a record. *Screeeech*: Britney?! Despite their surface similarities, could there be two more diametrically opposed stars? Born just three months apart, both women are from the South; both started performing around the age of eight; both are, or have been, managed by their parents; and each has a younger sister with a career in show business and a kid. But while Britney became a cautionary tale of pop success, Beyoncé is a role model to the president's daughters.

As if to acknowledge the burden of always having to be the good girl, on her latest album, *I Am... Sasha Fierce*, Beyoncé created a cartoonish stage persona that allowed her to both indulge in and distance herself from the racier, sexier (though still solidly PG-rated) material on the record. But her split personality was a little hard for fans and critics to take. In the end it served only to point out how self-conscious Beyoncé—the pop star—must feel about all those young girls watching her every hip grind and booty shake.

Beyoncé—the movie star—has been trying on different identities much more successfully, if less commercially, in Hollywood. Like most people, you probably missed her role in last year's critically acclaimed *Cadillac Records*, and that's a shame. Directed by Darnell Martin, it is an excellent film about the pre-rock 'n' roll Chicago blues scene centered on Muddy Waters and Chess Records, in which Beyoncé plays Etta James. Her performance—dark, bitter, profane—is devastating. Jeffrey

Wright, who plays Waters, says, "Beyoncé cast off the preconceived ideas of who she is, and she showed up on set to really do the humble work of an actor. We all know what Sasha Fierce is: a worldwide phenomenon, this extraordinary creature. But what Sasha Fierce is, is not what Beyoncé was doing with this movie. She was stretching herself. She is an evolving, complicated young woman who is going to surprise some people who think they have her pegged."

If Beyoncé was criticized for being tentative and unconvincing in *Dreamgirls*, in *Cadillac Records* she lets it rip. No one is more aware of the difference than Beyoncé herself. "Darnell brought something out in me, and I think it was because

she's a woman, and once again, kind of like with my band, we just had a connection, and we understood each other. She knew how to talk to me, and I knew what she meant."

Martin himself was astounded by Beyoncé's commitment. "She was willing to do the work," she says, "to put on the weight and not be glamorous, to go to a very ugly place and play someone she's never been: a drug addict, abused, abandoned by her parents. She was very excited to tear her image apart. When she first saw herself on film strung out, half-naked, overweight in the bathtub... she was

so happy. I love how she embraced the process."

Martin asked Beyoncé if she could gain 20 pounds, and was "shocked" that she agreed. But transforming her body is something Beyoncé has done before. To play *Dreamgirls*'s Deena Jones, she did a lemonade fast for thirteen days and then adhered to a strict diet-and-exercise regimen during a long shooting schedule. Gaining weight, she says, was more fun. "I ate a lot of butter-pecan ice cream," she admits. "But it's easy for me to gain weight. I'm not a naturally stick-thin girl. I'm not heavy, but I'm not skinny, either."

In the opening credits of Beyoncé's newest film, *Obsessed*, which opens this month, she looks comfortably curvy. She has very curly red hair—not exactly a transformation but not the Beyoncé we are used to looking at. Starring Ali Larter as the crazy white girl who stalks Beyoncé's husband (Idris Alba), *Obsessed* falls into the subgenre of over-the-top thrillers of which *Fatal Attraction* is the gold standard. The best that can be said for this movie is that it is destined to become a camp classic.

But there is one long scene in the film that really stands out, a confrontation between Beyoncé and Alba in the kitchen in which she discovers he's been lying to her and throws him out of the house. What it shares with Beyoncé's scenes in *Cadillac Records* is that next-level quality to her acting—and the ferocious rage she unleashes. When I tell her that I think of her as basically a sunny person and that her ability to express anger on-screen is a real surprise, she shoots right back, "Everyone has it in them. You know what's so great? I have made the choice—because it does take effort—to be happy. I mean, I *am* happy. But it's hard. Sometimes... you don't want to be that way. And holding all of that stuff in, holding the anger in and always being so composed... it was so great for me to be able to release everything. Imagine! I always have to be so put together, I always have (continued on page 249)

THE SHAPE OF THINGS

"She was willing to do the work," says director Darnell Martin, "to put on the weight and not be glamorous." Jil Sander silk column dress. In this story: hair, Kimberly Kimble, using Kimble Hair Care Systems for margaretmaldonado.com; makeup, Francesca Tolot for cloutieragency.com. Set design, Mary Howard. Details, see in This Issue.



For a behind-the-scenes video and interview with Beyoncé, watch *Vogue Diaries* at vogue.com.

FIERCE CREATURE

(continued from page 220)

to be pleasant. But sometimes I want to scream and holler, and I'm able to use the characters to release whatever pain or frustration has built up in me."

One senses that Beyoncé wants to join the very small pantheon of pop superstars—Cher, Diana, Barbra—who went on to big dramatic-film careers. If she stays away from silly movies like *Obsessed*, she might actually have a shot at it. "I'm finally connecting the way that I connect with music," she says. "I'm getting lost in the movies the way I get lost onstage."

Baz Luhrmann thinks so, too. "I'm sure that there is a dramatic cinematic life for her," he says. "It's been a long time since we've seen that kind of performer, like Barbra Streisand and Diana Ross, on the screen." Jackman agrees: "I have no doubt she'll win an Oscar one day. I can see the ambition in her to want to do that, to be in movies and really knock something out of the park. She's got it. Whatever it is, she's got it."

When I ask Beyoncé if she has any new films lined up, a look of disappointment crosses her face. "I've gotten three offers, but they are all filming while I'm away on tour." She lets out an ironic little laugh. "I wish there really was a Sasha Fierce, because I'd send her on the road and I would go and do the movies."

Back at the studio on West Twenty-fifth Street, it is approaching 10:00 P.M., and Beyoncé is hoping to get back to the dance (continued on page 250)

(continued from page 249) rehearsal before it breaks up for the night. Just outside the door, her ever-present bodyguard waits to escort her to an idling black SUV that will eventually take her home to Tribeca and her husband. Jay-Z, who is 39 and who grew up in the Marcy housing projects in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn, has come a long way from selling drugs and shooting his brother in the shoulder for stealing his jewelry. A very long way: He is part owner of the New Jersey Nets, and he and Beyoncé recently topped *Forbes's* list of highest-earning celebrity couples, at \$162 million in combined income.

Beyoncé's mother is also just outside the door, a constant hovering presence in her daughter's life. "My mother is truly my best friend," says Beyoncé. "We work together on our clothing line. She handles my movies: She reads all the scripts and tells me the good ones, and then I read them." (One wonders what Mom was thinking with *Obsessed*.) "And my father is still my manager. He does all of the business deals and negotiations." I scan her face for any sign of mixed feelings. "The best thing is having someone I trust. I know he is up until 4:00 A.M. fighting and working and doing things that no one else would do."

Matthew Knowles has a reputation in the music business for driving a hard bargain, to put it mildly. "He is a tough bargainer," says Beyoncé. "But he really knows what he's doing, and he's a workaholic. And for a while I was starting to become that way. I realized that just because my parents are workaholics—because my mother is, too—it doesn't mean I have to be one. So I have slowed down a lot—even though my slowing down is two movies and a tour in one year!"

When I ask her if she ever feels overexposed, she says flatly, "I don't." But when I push her on it, she gives in a little. "We just had a meeting yesterday about the tour," she says. "I approved everything I do, all the bookings, made sure everything makes sense for me." Pause. "The thing that me and my father sometimes bump heads over is: just too much." Do you argue? I ask. "It's definitely tense. And if there's one person in my life I argue with the most, it's him. But it's business. It's always about business."

There has been speculation over the years as to whether Jay-Z would ever get more involved in his wife's career. When I ask her what she has learned from him, she says, "I definitely have learned to be a little more picky from Jay. Because if something makes a lot of sense to everyone else, if he doesn't feel it, he's like, 'I don't want to talk about it.' Which is great." At least for now, Beyoncé's career will remain a family business. "It works," she says of the arrangement. "They do their own things. My father has other artists. My mother does her own clothing line on HSN. Their whole lives are not . . . me. But if they wanted to retire, I'm sure we would figure out who would help me."

Can you imagine having this big career without them? "I can't," she says, shaking her head. "We all did this together."

One wonders if Beyoncé will ever be ready to fully leave the nest. Until then, one of the benefits of this family setup is that the old maxim "Mother knows best" turns out to be true sometimes. Last year, when Beyoncé was trying to visualize her tour, she kept coming across images of vintage Thierry Mugler, the outré French designer whose early-1990s runway shows were the epitome of fierce. Tina Knowles took it upon herself to track Mugler down, and lo and behold, he is not only designing Beyoncé's costumes, he's directing segments of her show. "He completely understands me," says Beyoncé.

Indeed he does. "I think of Beyoncé as a modern-day warrior," he says. "A free spirit and a free woman. I love the way she is climbing steps. But I would not say she is 'ambitious.' She is following her destiny. She will surpass her iconic stature to become a legend. And she speaks highly about her fans. She does not want to disappoint them. She acts as if she had an appointment with them that she does not want to miss." □

San Francisco Chronicle

Students pick up rhythm of life at AileyCamp

Rachel Howard, Special to The Chronicle

Sunday, March 1, 2009



In the assembly auditorium of Berkeley's Longfellow Middle School, 35 teachers stand in the iconic opening formation of "Revelations," reaching yearningly to the sounds of "I Been 'Buked."

When fans of "Revelations" say the choreography is "dancer-proof," they probably don't have untrained public-school educators in mind. But when the music cuts, the teachers' faces are aglow -and so is David McCauley, the leader of this workshop. The tall, jovial former Ailey dancer knows these teachers will take this choreography - and their enthusiasm - and pass it on to their students, who will then have a personal connection to the dance when they see the real Ailey dancers at one of Cal Performances' SchoolTime matinees.

About 4,000 Bay Area children will see Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater through SchoolTime performances this year, paying only \$4 a ticket. Ten of the teachers at this Cal Performances in the Classroom workshop have also signed up to have McCauley make a personal visit to their students before the show.

" 'Revelations' is so beautiful," says teacher Mitchell McAfee of Park Day School in Oakland, stretching a bit before McCauley goes on to teach them the beginning of the baptism dance from the "Take Me to the Water" section. "I'm so happy my students will learn part of the dance. It brings it all together."

Then there are the children McCauley reaches in a far deeper way as the director of Cal Performances' AileyCamp. Every summer since 2001, AileyCamp has provided free dance and personal-development classes to 75 at-risk East Bay middle school students. Their six-week immersion in the Ailey spirit often changes their lives.

McCauley understands. Alvin Ailey changed his life, too. He first saw the company as a college modern dance student in Michigan, then spent 15 years with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in New York, first as a performer and later as a faculty member at the Ailey School.

"When I first saw the company, I was floored with emotion," he remembers. "It was an integrated company, cutting across race and economics."

"You're part of the Ailey family for life, that's absolutely true," he continues. "When I think hard about my relationship with Alvin, I start to cry. I miss him terribly. He wanted a dance center in San Francisco. We're getting a bit of a foothold. I want to see all the things he envisioned happen."

Rachel Howard is a freelance writer. E-mail her at pinkletters@sfgate.com.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/03/01/PK2Q160G39.DTL>

Alvin Ailey dance troupe visits Brumby Elementary

Published: 02/07/2009

By Marcus E. Howard
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MARIETTA - Members of the internationally renowned Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater were at Brumby Elementary School on Powers Ferry Road in Marietta this week as part of the theater's Arts In Education and Community program.

The famed New York City-based dance troupe is in Atlanta for its North American tour. While on tour, dancers reach out to about four schools each year to teach students about dance, language arts and social studies through late founder Alvin Ailey's signature work, "Revelations."



Alvin Ailey Dance Theater instructors Alenka Cizmesija, far left, and Wayne Williams, far right, teach a dance routine to fifth-graders at Brumby Elementary on Friday.

Photo by Thinh D. Nguyen

Brumby was the only school in Georgia chosen to participate in the educational program.

In addition to learning dance moves, about 120 students in three fifth-grade classes had written assignments this week that involved writing poetry and learning about Ailey. About 10 teachers, who also learned dances, helped the instructors.

"They like the creative process," said Alenka Cizmesija, 38, one of three dancers who instructed the students this week. "They liked learning new materials. They did a lot of written work, so it's very well-rounded."

Cizmesija said the students learned original choreography from "Revelations" - "lots of reaching, bending and falling."

Brumby student Tyler Mayberry, 11, said the experience with the Ailey dancers inspired him to think about becoming a professional dancer. He said he has danced since he was 3 years old.

"I thought it was fun, and they did a really good job teaching us," he said.

Cizmesija said her advice to young dancers is to seek good teachers and not give up easily. She said it takes about 12 years to train a good dancer.

The educational program runs through the spring and will go on to other schools in Chicago, Brooklyn and Boston.

The AAADT will perform at the Fox Theatre in Atlanta from Feb. 19 through Feb. 22. As part of the program, the fifth-graders at Brumby have been invited to attend the Feb. 20 performance. Sponsor J.P. Morgan is paying ticket and transportation expenses.

"They're going to see some of the pieces they learned about in this particular program," Cizmesija said. "Because they do study and know some movement, and the story behind the ballet, they're much more interested when they see it on stage."

Brumby Principal Dr. Amanda Richie said the dance company contacted the school and asked if they wanted to participate in the program.

"The children have enjoyed it and they worked really hard to learn the dances," Richie said.

This 2008-09 season marks the 50th anniversary of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, which was formed as the Alvin Ailey & Company in 1958. Since then, it has traveled to 70 countries on six continents, according to the AAADT.

In 1960, Ailey choreographed "Revelations," which became his most renowned dance piece.

Ailey lived from 1931 to 1989. He grew up in Texas and California. He became interested in dance as a youth in Los Angeles, after watching performances by legendary dancers like Gene Kelly, Fred Astaire and the Nicholas Brothers.

According to the AAADT, Ailey took classes at the Lester Horton School and was chosen to take it over after Horton died. He then went on to dance and act in New York.

The popularity of the AAADT - the first multicultural U.S. dance company - stems from the way Ailey was able to link African-American cultural experience with the American modern dance tradition.

"It's the company seen more around the world than any other company, including ballet companies," said Cizmesija, who is originally from Croatia and has been with the AAADT since 1994.

For more information about the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and upcoming performances, visit AlvinAiley.org.

my wednesday

The Detroit News
FEBRUARY 4, 2009

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Eats&Drinks



Wayne E. Smith / The Detroit News

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Photos by Brandy Baker / The Detroit News

MICHAIAH MOON has dreams of attending the Juilliard School in New York City. The 16-year-old says she is a fan of Alvin Ailey's exciting choreography. "The movement, the music – it doesn't bore you, ever!" says the Detroit International Academy 11th-grader. "Whatever criticism the instructors have to offer, I will take it constructively. There is so much bad going on in Detroit and problems in our schools. For them to come to Detroit, to this school, is like a relief."

Dancing with the stars



Alvin Ailey's **NASHA THOMAS-SCHMITT** says projects like "Revelations" help expose youths to the arts, and in doing so also help the arts. "We are cultural ambassadors. We hope to foster future audiences for the arts," says Thomas-Schmitt.

Alvin Ailey troupe thrills local teens with whirl of a lifetime



Teaching artist **DARIUS DAMAZI WILLIAMS** runs the students through moves from "Revelations." Teaching is a way of giving back and being a role model, he says. "It is a huge responsibility for me. I am a mentor, a big brother, a surrogate father." **SIMONE CHANEY**, 17, far left, aspires to become a dancer. The 12th-grader was overjoyed when she learned that Alvin Ailey was coming to her school. "It is overwhelming that this is actually happening. President Obama, now this! Are you kidding? It is unbelievable!"

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

7:30 p.m. Feb. 12-13, 2:30 and 7:30 p.m. Feb. 14, 2:30 p.m. Feb. 15
Sweet Honey in the Rock will join the 7:30 p.m. performance on Feb. 14
The Detroit Opera House
1526 Broadway St., Detroit

Tickets \$29-\$96
Call (313) 237-7464 or visit www.ticketmaster.com



LOLITA REESE got off work early as a security officer to watch her daughter Jillynn Reese, 16, participate in the first day of the program. Alvin Ailey's Nasha Thomas-Schmitt invited Reese to show off her dance skills during a short dance warm-up.

By **URSULA WATSON** | *The Detroit News*

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater celebrates its 50th anniversary continuing to do what it has always done — be a source of inspiration.

The dance company was founded in 1958 by the pioneering choreographer and dancer Alvin Ailey, who died 1989. Ailey believed dance came from the people and should be given back to the people. Alvin Ailey Arts in Education & Community Programs carry on his vision, reaching back to the community with projects such as Revelations: An Interdisciplinary Approach, in which dancers go into schools to teach the legendary Ailey dance piece "Revelations" while touting the importance of language arts and social studies.

Alvin Ailey Arts representatives have been conducting the program at the Detroit International Academy since Jan. 26, and will be there until Friday. The program is sponsored by a grant from JPMorgan Chase. Detroit International Academy is an all-girl, college-prep school nestled between the hulking structure of Northern High School and the historic Little Rock Baptist Church on Woodward Avenue. With a school district and city burdened with various woes, the staff, students and parents see the presence of Alvin Ailey as an invaluable, uplifting experience.

On the first day, Academy dance teacher Heidi Smith beamed as she watched her students take direction under the watchful gaze of Nasha Thomas-Schmitt, co-director of the Arts in Education and Community Programs and national director of AileyCamp. Thomas-Schmitt was joined by Ailey teaching artists Theara Ward and Darius Damazi Williams.

You can reach Ursula Watson at (313) 222-2613 or uwatson@detnews.com.

Watch video of Alvin Ailey instructors at the Detroit International Academy at detnews.com/entertainment.

AUGUST 2008

NYC students end a summer of dance with a special performance



Student dancers rehearse for their final show

Curtain up: New York City student dancers are taking the stage.

This summer, 90 New York City students learned to twirl, tap, and leap at a summer camp organized by the Children's Aid Society and the Alvin Ailey Dance American Dance Theater. The campers, aged 10 to 14, participated in six-weeks of rigorous arts instruction and put on a final performance this week called "50 Years of Alvin Ailey."

Amparo Santiago, the program's director, interviewed more than 200 students from schools that partner with the Children's Aid Society before choosing 90 to attend the summer camp.

"The [kids] didn't need to know how to dance," she said. "They just needed passion and drive and interest."

In just six weeks, the dancers made a great deal of progress.

"I'm going to try to come back again next year because now that I'm dancing, I feel like I've toned up," first-time dancer Kaiyana Cervera, a rising sixth grader at the Mott Hall School in Manhattan, said. "This will help me with my self-esteem. I feel better, healthier."

Throughout the six weeks, students received lessons in a variety of dance techniques, including modern, tap, jazz, and ballet, working with expert teachers from Alvin Ailey and dancers who perform on Broadway and at the Dance Theater of Harlem.

Alana Jenkins, a past camper, enjoyed the dance program so much that she returned as an instructor. A recent graduate of the Young Women's Leadership School in East Harlem, Alana served as the special assistant to the camp director this summer.

"This program helped me release the stress I felt from working so hard in school," she said. She plans to study dance and education at college in the fall.



Nayanna Abisogun, 11, of New Brighton takes part in ballet class.



At AileyCamp, dancers learn choreography in a piece titled "Revelations."



Ballet dancers practice their footwork at AileyCamp in IS 61.

Students learn to succeed through dance

AileyCamp, located at IS 61, teaches campers self-esteem, self-discipline and critical thinking

By **NORA NEWHOUSE**
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

AileyCamp, a program designed to inspire young people by offering a full scholarship day camp for dancers, has had a great impact on Island youths with its recent installment of CAS/AileyCamp Staten Island, sponsored by the Children's Aid Society and the Department of Youth and Community Development's Out-of-School Time program.

The new AileyCamp, the second expansion in New York City and the ninth site nationwide, is located at IS 61, Brighton Heights, and allows current and incoming students a chance to dance, learn about themselves and understand the history of Alvin Ailey.

"We use dance as a tool to develop skills that students need to succeed, like self-esteem, self-discipline, and critical thinking," explained Nasha Thomas-Schmitt, the national director of AileyCamp, who like many staff members at the camp has trained with the world-famous Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

In addition to ballet, jazz,

modern and West African dance, AileyCamp offers classes in creative communications and personal development, which are geared toward advancing the emotional growth of the enrolled adolescents.

AileyCamp is a six-week program that ends on Aug. 10 with a final performance that will showcase the hard work put in by the dedicated campers.

The Children's Aid Society sponsors an additional two weeks of traditional day camp after the performance.

"To be able to offer a magnet school a program of this quality is an unbelievable gift," remarked Ilene Papert, the director of the Goodhue Center for CAS. AileyCamp also provides a chance for its more skillful dancers to continue to study with the Alvin Ailey organization.

SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

Every summer, six to eight of the camp's 80 dancers will be granted scholarships for further training at the Alvin Ailey School.

Spots at AileyCamp, which employs an extensive recruitment and interview process to select its campers from a pool of applicants.

But the camp is not only reserved for aspiring dancers.

Norman Davis, a 12-year-old Clifton resident, decided to enroll as a camper after

More on the web



For a video on the AileyCamp at IS 61, Brighton Heights, go to www.silive.com/video

being disqualified from his football team due to poor grades. Davis realized that a rigorous dance program could help him train for next year's football season.

Ten-year-old Kayla Navarrete of Mariners Harbor said, "I want to be a teacher, but dancing could be my fallback career."

As a large group of uninformed campers performed a graceful series of high kicks, twirls, splits, slides, snaps, shakes, sways, hops and jumps, it became apparent that these youngsters were cultivating the kind of focus and self-discipline that can only help them in their future endeavors.

Or, as campers recite each day — "I will not use the word *can't* to define my possibilities."

Nora Newhouse is a news reporter for the Advance. She may be reached at nnewhouse@siadvance.com.



Melanie Molina, 10, of Grymes Hill participates in ballet class.

August 1, 1999

Camp Uses Dance to Reach Children

By ALBERTA EISEMAN

IT was the start of a new day at Ailey Camp, and the Bernhard Center at the University of Bridgeport was full of the sounds of drums and piano. Breakfast had just been cleared away, and 52 campers were at work in the spacious building, walking across a mirrored studio two by two -- "very regal, very proud," the teacher stressed -- or bouncing on bent knees in West African dance class, held on the center's stage.

Ailey Camps are six-week summer programs for children 11 to 14 that are run by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, the New York dance group. The camps started more than 10 years ago in Kansas City, Kan., then New York and, for the first time this summer, in Chicago and Bridgeport. The program, which combines dance training with personal development, was the dream of the late Alvin Ailey, dancer, choreographer and founder of the group.

Remembering his own beginnings as an urban child, Mr. Ailey, whose company is known for its diverse repertory of classical and nontraditional works, wanted youngsters from city neighborhoods to have the opportunity to experience and grow through dance. The children were to be selected according to financial need and other factors that might put them at risk of dropping out of school.

From the beginning, Ailey Camps were designed as cooperative efforts, with local groups acting as sponsors and working with the dancers.

In Bridgeport, the Music and Arts Center for the Handicapped became the main sponsoring organization; officially, the camp is known as MACH/Ailey Camp.

"It's a proven program that has been successful in three other cities," said Alan J. Fox, president and chief executive of the arts center. "It combines the rigor and discipline of dance with personal development classes that give children the context for better understanding themselves and each other."

The Charles D. Smith Jr. Foundation agreed to pay for the personal development component of the curriculum; the university provided its performing arts building at a reduced rent; the city paid for meals and transportation and some money came in from local businesses, foundations and individuals.

"It will cost about \$100,000 to run the camp," said Harold Levine, chairman emeritus of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, who was instrumental in bringing the camp to Bridgeport. "We still have a few thousand dollars to go."

The students all receive free tuition, transportation to and from their neighborhoods, breakfast and lunch each day, camp uniforms and dance clothes.

"We try to reach those children who would not have the opportunity for this type of experience," said Tina Bush, director of the Bridgeport program. "We want to give them a chance to see another way of life, another way of expressing themselves."

Ms. Bush, a Bridgeport native who has danced, acted and taught with companies around the country and abroad, is rehearsal director of the student performance group and was in charge of recruiting the students. She also hired the six teachers -- a culturally diverse group of specialists in jazz, ballet, modern and West African dance, creative writing and personal development -- and the four group leaders, college-age men and women from nearby towns who assist the teachers.

Last spring, Ms. Bush visited four Bridgeport middle schools to explain the program, giving dance demonstrations along with a male dancer. Later, she interviewed the applicants to find out about their backgrounds and family life, any medical conditions that might be aggravated by the camp's active schedule and any school problems for which they might wish help.

Ailey Camp is not designed to train professional dancers, nor are the campers selected for their aptitude. A few of the girls who applied had done some dancing, but none of the boys.

"We took just about everyone who applied, eight boys and 44 girls," Ms. Bush said. "We found some good role models. At this age, they are looking to each other and it's important to have that balance."

Camp meets from 9 A.M. to 3:30 P.M., five days a week, with Fridays reserved for field trips to museums, beaches and a visit to the Ailey Dance Center in New York. Two classes are scheduled for the morning and two after lunch, with dance sessions alternating with personal development and creative communications workshops, where the children will be taught to express their feelings verbally, in writing and in poetry. Communicating seemed to be no problem for a group that was recently gathered around Seitu-Jemel Hart, 23, an exuberant poet, writer and teacher.

His class begins with a daily affirmation. The participants all call out their names and give thanks for a specific pleasure. "I am grateful for my grandmother," "for the right to come here," or "for the Puerto Rican Day parade," the children said. The testimonies were then greeted by cheers.

The campers all keep journals and create paper stars with words and sketches that describe one of their peers. "The stars represent who you are from someone else's point of view," said Mr. Hart. "It's important to honor one another."

They also make "Me Bags," which are paper bags filled with cards, photographs, baby pictures, anything that is important to them and will help others get to know who they are.

Personal development class offers guidance with problems of adjustment, decision making, drug abuse prevention, proper nutrition and sexual responsibility.

No one can skip a class now and then. Campers sign an agreement that they will attend all classes, respect the teachers and treat each other well.

"I really enjoy the camp," said Shante Randall, 13, one of the girls with some experience in dance. "The teachers are very nice; they give you confidence. I did not feel that at the school where I went."

As for Terrell Thomas, 13, whose interests run more to basketball and drums than to dance, he called the camp "a lot of fun" and admitted that some of the stretches he has learned will help in sports.

The Ailey Camp season, which began July 6 and ends Aug. 13, will be capped by a final performance on Aug. 12 at 7 P.M. at the Bernhard Center on the University of Bridgeport campus, at the corner of University Avenue and Iranistan Avenue. The production will be open to the public free of charge. Campers will create their own dances and skits, read from works they have written and perform dances that were choreographed especially for them.