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AILEY EXTENSION

REAL CLASSES FOR REAL PEOPLE

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Left to Right: Zumba, Ballet 4 Kids, and Hip-Hop. All photos by Kyle Froman.
Click on photos for hi-res download. Please credit photos.

Since opening its doors to the public in 2005, Ailey Extension has welcomed **over 135,000 people** from around the world to experience “real classes for real people.” The program makes dance accessible to people of all ages, levels, and backgrounds through an array of dance and fitness classes, workshops, guest artist series, student performances, and panel discussions, giving participants not only a chance to learn dance techniques, but an experience with history and live music. Ailey Extension expands on the legacy of founder Alvin Ailey who believed that dance came from the people and it should always be delivered back to the people.

Ailey Extension offers **more than 25 different dance and fitness technique classes** for students 16 years or older, such as Horton (the modern dance technique featured in Mr. Ailey’s classic *Revelations*), Ballet, West African, Theater Dance, Samba, Zumba, Ailey Barre and Hip-Hop, among others. **All levels are welcome, including absolute beginners.**

A wide array of skill and confidence building classes and workshops are also available year-round for toddlers (Tiny Steps; ages 2), kids (Hip-Hop and Latin Moves 4 Kids; ages 8-11), and teenagers (Teen Ballet, Broadway Jazz, and Hip-Hop; ages 12-17).

Classes are held seven days a week in the morning, afternoon, and evening at **The Joan Weill Center for Dance — New York’s largest building dedicated to dance and the home of the world-renowned [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater](#)** (405 West 55th Street, at 9th Avenue). All classes are taught by leading instructors in their respective techniques.

Class prices start as low as \$22. New students are encouraged to take advantage of an introductory offer: 2 classes for \$38. Students can also save when they purchase a package of 5, 10, or 20 classes.

Fans of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater can try their **first Ailey Extension class for free** by presenting a performance ticket stub. Returning students receive a free class with the purchase of a 10-class card. The “Ticket to Dance” special offer expires 60 days after the performance date.

For the complete Ailey Extension class schedule and more information visit www.aileyextension.com

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AILEY EXTENSION

LISA JOHNSON-WILLINGHAM DIRECTOR



Photo by Joe Epstein.

[Lisa Johnson-Willingham](#) became director of Ailey Extension in 2011, expanding Alvin Ailey's vision that dance is for everybody through innovative and accessible dance programs for students of all ages, levels, and backgrounds. Under her leadership, the program has continued to thrive since its inception in 2005, attracting over 83,000 new students; creating annual workshops like Ailey Experience, Voices and Visions, and World Dance Celebration; and hosting premiere guest artists like Les Twins, Yanis Marshall, and Pretty BIG Movement.

For five years (1994-1999), Ms. Johnson-Willingham was a member of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater under the artistic direction of Judith Jamison. Throughout her career, she also danced with Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble, New World Dance Company, Donald Byrd/The Group, Joel Hall Dance Company, Deeply Rooted Productions, Footprints, and Cerqua/Rivera Art Experience.

During her time with the Ailey Company, Ms. Johnson-Willingham was invited by Judith Jamison to choreograph for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater during its 40th Anniversary Season – a piece entitled *Restricted* (1998). While living in Chicago, she choreographed for many prominent dance companies, theater productions, and musicals at the Goodman Theater, Steppenwolf Theater, Chicago Dramatist, and Congo Square Theater Company.

Ms. Johnson-Willingham leadership experience in the arts includes a decade-long position as Director of AileyCamp Chicago, heading dance programs at the Dance Conservatory of Chicago High School for the Arts and Whitney Young Magnet High School, and teaching positions at Columbia College, Olive Harvey College, and Joffrey Ballet Academy of Dance.

Throughout her 24-year history with Ailey, she has been passionate about mentoring aspiring dancers, such as Ailey II dancer Martell Ruffin and Ailey dancer Solomon Dumas – who attended AileyCamp Chicago during her tenure and in 2016 became the first former AileyCamper to earn a role as member of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

A Washington, D.C. native, Ms. Johnson-Willingham attended the Duke Ellington School of the Arts and is a graduate of University of the Arts in Philadelphia. She currently lives in New Jersey with her two children, Quincy and Noah.

AILEY[®] EXTENSION

PUBLICITY HIGHLIGHTS

AILEY EXTENSION

What the Critics are Saying...

AILEY EXTENSION

"It is the sweetest form of New York theater, polished yet spontaneous, **top-notch yet accessible...**"

The New York Times, Anthony Ramirez

"...one of the **friendliest all-inclusive spots for adults to learn to move in the city.**"

Time Out New York, Tolly Wright

"...**best dance classes for adults.**"

Time Out New York, Helen Shaw

"It's an **eye-catching performance** at the corner of Ninth Avenue and 55th Street, and passers-by – sometimes one, sometimes 30 – take in the free show."

The New York Times, Anthony Ramirez

"The instructors are first-rate..."

Vogue, Kimberly Straub

"...experience the **pro-training for the non-pro...**"

FOX 5's *Good Day New York*, Julie Chang

"Amid sweeping views of Midtown Manhattan, the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation is committing to its founder's mission of bringing **dance to the people with the Ailey Extension.**"

Backstage, Briana Rodriguez

"All nonprofit organizations have a difficult time in these profit-ravenous times, but the **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has a hidden weapon: its thriving Ailey Extension program...**Prices are reasonable...instruction is by some of the top teachers in NYC."

amNY, Sheila Anne Feeney

"...it's a rare class that...**leaves you beaming from ear to ear, grinning with pure joy.** That my friends, is the power of dance."

W42St, Ruth Walker

"Although I didn't know the people next to me in class, I felt connected to them... **I couldn't help but notice the broad range of people in it – different ages, ethnicities, and genders – all rooted together in dance...**"

SELF, Tiffany Dodson

HORTON

"The [Horton] class may be at a world-renowned center for dancers, but snobby 'dance world' airs were absent... I emerged feeling **terrific: stronger, taller and more limber.**"

amNY, Sheila Anne Feeney

HIP-HOP

"...[A] kicked-back course that **attracts young adults from all over the city and beyond.**"

New York Daily News, Robert Dominguez and Gina Salamone

"... **funky, calorie-burning choreography.**"

Time Out New York, Helen Yun

"...teaches kids ages 7 to 11 **all the hot dance moves** while developing coordination, body awareness and self-confidence."

Time Out Kids [regarding Hip-Hop 4 Kids class]

AFRO FLOW YOGA

"The class is constantly at odds with itself, simultaneously **peaceful and high-energy, meditative and pulsating, spiritual and earthy.**"

The New York Times, Tiffany Martinbrough

"There was something really special about the way the class connected me to the rhythms and movements of my ancestors, **in a way that no other fitness class has before.**"

SELF, Tiffany Dodson

TINY STEPS

"Kids can cut loose at this **welcoming, noncompetitive** dance school...instructors guide toddlers and their caretakers through **playful movement exercises...**"

Time Out Kids

PILATES

"Rhythmic Pilates will take you on a holistic journey to the center of your body where you will become intimate with muscles you never knew existed... **A natural teacher, [Sarita] Allen instinctively personalizes the class to encompass the individual needs and ability of her students, maximizing the experience for every participant.**"

Harlem World Magazine, Walter Rutledge

MASALA BHANGRA

"...even beginners and walk-ins will appreciate the flavor of this full-blown workout class."

Time Out New York, Kate A.

"...the moves are surprisingly intuitive, making it easy for beginners to jump in."

Backstage, Briana Rodriguez

SAMBA

"...We all finished smiling and clapping – and drenched in sweat!"

SHAPE, Mallory Creveling

SALSA

"...best salsa dancing classes in NYC."

Time Out New York, Tolly Wright

WEST AFRICAN

"...exhilarating!"

Time Out New York, AR

"...a vigorous, fast-paced aerobic workout."

The New York Times, Julia Lawlor

"Maguette' Camara reinforces the joyful, celebratory nature of West African with his positive energy and words of encouragement."

Dance Teacher Magazine, Rachel Caldwell

ZUMBA

"... accessible to people with a wide range of ability."

New York Post, Beth Landman

"When you're at Alvin Ailey, you're surrounded by oodles of [professional] dancers stretching, leaping around, and just being beyond major in the hallways and by the locker rooms—it's amazing to witness. The mix of body-sculpting movements with fast and slow rhythms keeps you on your toes. **Ever since I took this class I just want to go back. And do it again. Everyday.**"

OK! Magazine, Kelli Acciardo

AILEY EXTENSION

Broadcast & Facebook Live Highlights

(Ctrl + Click on images for full video)

Live with Kelly and Ryan: DanzaTone instructor Jose Azuna teaches anchors Kelly Ripa and Ryan Seacrest a dance fitness workout for "JanYOUary."



CBS This Morning: Ballet instructor Finis Jung discusses dancing well beyond retirement age and how he inspires dancers of every age.



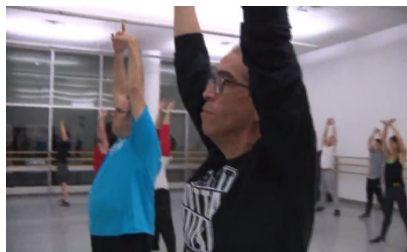
The View: Instructor Sarina Jain leads host Sherri Shepard, Brooke Shields, and an audience member through a Masala Bhangra workout before performing with students.



NBC4: New York Live's Jacque Reed attends a Horton class at Ailey Extension with instructor and former Ailey dancer Amos Machanic.



PIX11: Star students Joseph Laino and George Junco share their weight loss story, losing 160 pounds combined with hip-hop dance classes.



FOX 5: Good Day NY's Christal Young tries a variety of dance classes offered at Ailey Extension, including Horton, Hip-Hop, African and Vogue.



CBS2 NY: Samba instructor Quenia Ribeiro previews Ailey Extension's Celebrate Brazil Workshop.



ABC7: ABC Medical Correspondent Dr. Sapna Parikh tried Zumba and West African classes during Ailey's NYC Dance Week celebration.



New York Times Facebook Live: A tap footwork lesson by instructor Marshall Davis.



Good Morning America Facebook Live: Kukuwa African Dance Workout instructor Cassandra Nuamah teaches a #ToneIn20 routine.



Dance Magazine Facebook Live: Artistic Director Emerita Judith Jamison leads a Celebrating Alvin Ailey Workshop on what would have been the founder's 88th birthday.



Health Facebook Live: DanceFIT instructor Karen Arceneaux leads a full-body, HIIT workout.



FIT CITY

Rhythm and Yoga, in Deep Conversation

Afro Flow blends West African dancing, vinyasa style, live drumming and singing.

By TIFFANY MARTINBROUGH

Inside a glass-enclosed dance studio at the Ailey School in Hell's Kitchen in Manhattan, a diverse group of New Yorkers, stripped down to sports bras, T-shirts, tights and bare feet, stretched in a circle.

Light drumming and singing accompanied a gentle, yoga flow. A collective "aaah-hhh" soon followed.

Gradually, the tempo sped up. A vocalist intensified her calls to the universe. The students' moves accelerated.

The percussion built to a feverish pace, and soon sweaty bodies were twisting, reaching, jumping and gyrating to African rhythms. The beating of the drum seemed practically hypnotic.

Then, just like that, the energy relented. The drumming slowed and the melody softened, returning the group to that initial place of peace.

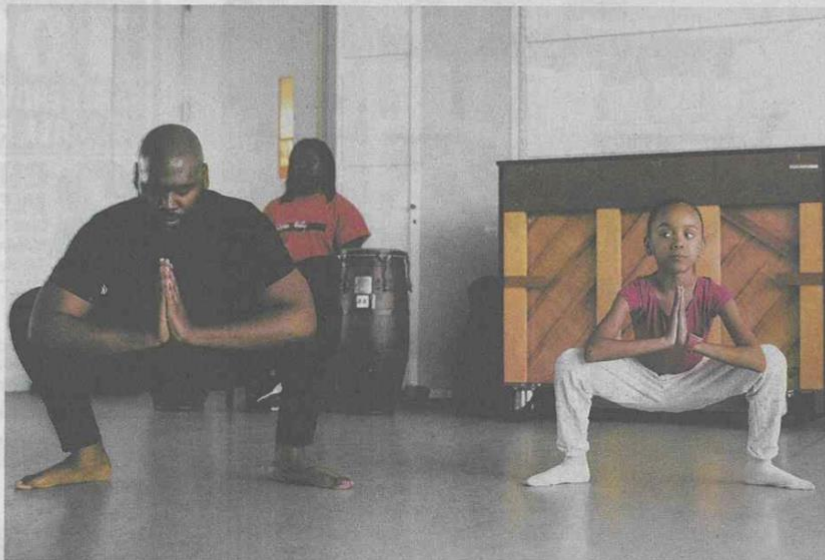
This colossal mash-up of West African dance and vinyasa yoga is called Afro Flow Yoga. Leslie Salmon-Jones, an Alvin Ailey-trained dancer, and her husband, Jeff Jones, an engineer and drummer, created the class in 2008 after spending two years in West Africa, Haiti and Jamaica.

"My husband and I decided to take a trip to learn more about our ancestry," Ms. Salmon-Jones said. The couple visited Ghana, Togo, Benin and Ivory Coast. They visited slave dungeons, Ms. Salmon-Jones said, and throughout the trip learned about all kinds of healing rituals, including ones related to dance.

Upon their return, Ms. Salmon-Jones was invited to teach yoga and Afro-Caribbean dance in Sedona, Ariz. That was where she had the idea to bring the two disciplines together with live music. "Even the name came through," she recalled. "I taught the first Afro Flow Yoga at this festival on the vortexes in the mountain on a full moon."

While researching the class, Ms. Salmon-Jones discovered that yoga had been practiced in ancient Egypt. "You see in the hieroglyphics all the yoga poses," she said.

The more she developed her idea, the more Ms. Salmon-Jones seemed able to merge the worlds of yoga and African dance into a cohesive class. "The movements come out of the connection to the earth, to the sky, to the heart," she said of African dance. (The same, arguably, could be said of yoga.) "We do a lot of heart-opening movements and combination of dances of the African diaspora — harvest dances in West Af-



PHOTOGRAPHS BY SARA NAOMI LEWIS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

rica, planting the seeds, warrior movements." She demonstrated, thrusting her hands and legs in a stylish, rhythmic manner.

"A lot of the dances and rhythms survived the slave trade, so all throughout the diaspora there's a connection," she said. Dance was "part of the healing."

Afro Flow Yoga is two parts yoga with one part African dance wedged in between. After finishing the first part — a vinyasa portion of hip rolls, downward dogs, cobras and

slow roll-ups — participants transition to a feisty mélange of concentrated African dances before ending the workout with more yoga.

The class is constantly at odds with itself, simultaneously peaceful and high-energy, meditative and pulsating, spiritual and earthy.

It is also expanding, with Ms. Salmon-Jones training teachers in Boston, where she lives, Tel Aviv, Toronto, Oakland, Los Angeles and New York City.

Scenes from a culture mash-up: Pilin Anice, above, leads an Afro Flow class, which is two parts yoga and one part African dance, at the Ailey School. "We do a lot of heart-opening movements and combination of dances of the African diaspora," said Leslie Salmon-Jones, who created the class with her husband, Jeff Jones.

In an Ailey School class, a singer intensifies her calls to the universe.

Pilin Anice, another Ailey-trained dancer, teaches the class at Ailey, which takes place every other Sunday and costs \$20.

Ms. Anice said that she appreciates how the class gathers its strength from its emphasis on spherical formations.

"The circle is really good medicine," she explained. "It's rooted in love and compassion." It's also what Africans traditionally practiced, Ms. Anice added. "They'd come into a circle. Whatever they needed, it's like their movement was a prayer. Not just dance for dance sake."

The live music for Afro Flow Yoga blends peaceful vocals with percussion. "It's all in a flow, particularly when people are breathing together," said Dana Gae Hanchard, the vocalist for the class. "You just stay focused on what's happening — inhalation, exhalation, how people are coming out of a pose, how far they're going," she said. "I feel my role is to help them in that."

The conga drumming is both intense and introspective. "Congas come out of the tradition of central Africa," said Ron McBee, the class drummer. "They're melodic." Mr. McBee also plays the mbira, a traditional thumb piano native to Zimbabwe.

"It's really inspiring, the connection to your ancestors," said a 44-year-old student known as Anouska. "My family is from Guyana, so feeling that strong connection with slavery and my family coming over as indentured servants" is energizing, she said.

"The energy is amazing," said Michelle Kilic, 47, who has been taking Afro Flow for more than four years. "The endorphins are going through you, and you just feel alive. And afterward, you just go out and conquer stuff. You just feel so blessed and grateful."

Others find the class to be healing. Weeks after recovering from surgery to remove a cyst that caused an ectopic pregnancy, Andrea Smith, 35, longed for an activity that would alleviate her emotional and physical pain. "I was a dancer in the past, and I was looking for something that had rhythm and the healing structure of yoga," she said. "Something that could help me meditate while also stretching my limbs and wringing out my organs so that I could start the healing process."

She found what she was looking for. "The yoga did what it needed to do," said Ms. Smith. "But you realize that African dance is the conversation between you and the ancestors and the earth and God."

chatroom

SEEN & HEARD AT THE DANCE TEACHER SUMMIT

SPOTLIGHT ON KAREN ARCENEUX

It's hard to believe Karen Arceneaux's formal dance training began when she switched her college major from chemistry to earn a BFA in choreographic design. Arceneaux immediately hit the ground running, training at the American Dance Festival, the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance and The Ailey School, where she was mentored by internationally recognized master teacher Ana Marie Forsythe. Having spent nearly her entire career as a choreographer, administrator and teacher at Ailey, Arceneaux possesses a deep understanding of the company's aesthetic. Recently, she spoke to *DT* about Horton technique's enduring capacity to inspire. —Helen Rolfe

Dance Teacher: How is Horton technique still relevant in 2017, even to dancers who don't necessarily aspire to join Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater?

Karen Arceneaux: Whether you're training to be a professional dancer or training for the love of dance, Horton strengthens the body and increases flexibility and balance. Horton is a beautiful technique that works with the dancer's natural facility. I have many adults who take my Horton classes through The Ailey Extension program. They tell me my class made them stronger in general and



Arceneaux teaching Horton technique at The Ailey School in New York City

in specific areas: running, belly dance, ballet, hip hop. Some speak of an increase in mobility and decrease in joint stiffness. Others are excited that the class makes them feel like dancers.

DT: You have a lot of experience in substituting for other teachers at the last minute. Any tips for preparing to teach class on the fly?

KA: The more experience you have teaching, the easier it is to jump into last-minute subbing opportunities. After being asked to sub on the spot several times in the beginning of my teaching career, I decided to always be prepared. Because teaching Horton was so new to me, I wrote down the order of class from warm-up to center floor to across the floor and the combination, and studied this outline religiously. Fast-forward 16-plus years, and the order is ingrained. While I do prepare when teaching specific material, I don't spend a lot of time planning. Sometimes I prepare on the train into the city. I love spontaneity and leave room for it. I may have an idea and build on that idea by feeding off the energy of the students and the class level: beginner, intermediate, advanced or mixed. I love creating on the spot—there's never a dull moment.

now Chelsea

YOUR WEEKLY COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER SERVING CHELSEA, HUDSON YARDS & HELL'S KITCHEN

NCO Program to Bring New Sheriffs in Town

BY SEAN EGAN

In his second Community Council meeting as the commanding officer of the 10th Precinct, Captain Paul Lanot spent the evening of Wed., Oct. 26 examining new problems, addressing old issues, and looking forward to the future.

Getting right down to business,

10TH PRECINCT continued on p. 4

Bucks Trend: Dem Donations Dominate in Chelsea, Clinton

BY DENNIS LYNCH

It shouldn't be a surprise that the vast majority of people in Chelsea and Hell's Kitchen are liberal and support Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton. Those people are showing their support with donations, much more than in previous elections, according to the folks at RentHop

VOTE continued on p. 5

FLECK SHINES IN NEW SHOW



Performance artist John Fleck puts his stamp on the gothic horror genre, in "Blacktop Highway." See page 17.



Photo by Kyle Froman

Masala Bhangra Workout creator Sarina Jain (center) with her students.

A DANCE INSTRUCTOR is a Person in Your Neighborhood

BY DUSICA SUE MALESEVIC

For many New Yorkers, it is a dream to be able to walk to work. Some dance instructors for the Ailey Extension in Hell's Kitchen get to live the reality.

Robin Dunn has lived in Hell's Kitchen since 1992, and literally belted out lyrics when asked about the Ailey Extension opening on W. 55th St. in 2005.

"Can you feel a brand new day?" she sang.

Housed at the Joan Weill Center For Dance (405 W. 55th St., at Ninth Ave.), the extension offers over 20 different dance and fitness techniques, including hip-hop classes that Dunn has taught since it opened.

Dunn, a Woodside native, started dancing when she was 10, after seeing a friend dance a solo at a recital. Her mom signed

AILEY EXTENSION continued on p. 3

Dance Teachers Tap Routine Just Steps From Residences

AILEY EXTENSION continued from p. 1

her and her sisters up for tap, jazz, and ballet classes at the Charlotte Pollak Dance Studio in Queens.

She was a teaching assistant at Pollak's school and started working professionally as a dancer when she was 17, Dunn explained to Chelsea Now in a phone interview. Dunn also took classes at the Ailey School, where she studied ballet, Horton, and Dunham.

In 1989, Dunn was introduced to hip-hop dance pioneers Mr. Wiggles and Buddha Stretch and studied with both, she explained. Dunn said she was blessed with tradition first and then hip-hop, and she "made the translation, created a pedagogical approach. I speak both languages."

In 2003, Dunn started teaching hip-hop at the Ailey School, which offers professional training for aspiring dancers. She taught at the Ailey School until 2012, she said. At the Ailey Extension, she teaches a Beginner Hip-Hop class and an Absolute Beginner Hip-Hop class.

There is nothing typical or ordinary about Dunn's class, which begins with students lying on the floor and meditating.

She laughed when she explained that if people are late, they always ask, "Is this hip-hop? Is this hip-hop?"

After the breathing exercises, there is warm-up and the students learn the choreography. Dunn says she makes sure to "sprinkle" what she called the three gifts — she has her students say, "Ain't nobody flyer than me!" "You are the best there is," and "Don't hold the good hostage."

"When I can make them smile, laugh and dance — I feel good," she said.

Dunn said she credits Pollak for

teaching her how to be an instructor and the importance of a student's experience. She teaches fundamentals so that a student can be prepared to take more advanced classes.

"I'm a farmer — I know how to plant the seeds to help people grow," she said.

In addition to Pollak, her mom, Edith E. Dunn, who passed away last year, was a huge influence.

"My teaching has gone to a whole other level because I feel the two of us teach together," Dunn said. "She's the engine that keeps me going still."

Dunn says she is always encouraging neighbors and local merchants to take her class. She said the extension connects neighbors, and that there is a "sense of community within the building itself."

"The Ailey Extension was created in 2005 to fulfill Mr. Ailey's lifelong commitment to bring dance to the people," said Lisa Johnson-Willingham, director of the Ailey Extension since 2011. She was referring to Alvin Ailey, the legendary choreographer who founded the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1958.

The extension's slogan is "real classes for real people," and to that end there are over 80 classes offered to the general public, she said. A person only needs an interest — not a background in dance — to take a class, Johnson-Willingham explained in a phone interview.

"It's a very welcoming environment," she said.

Everything from Beginner Ballet to Zumba Fitness to world dance techniques (such as Afro-Cuban Folkloric and Samba Reggae Workout) is offered — to name just a few choices.

Currently, construction is underway on a 10,000-square-foot expansion of the Joan Weill Center For Dance that



Courtesy Alvin Ailey Extension

A rendering of the \$25 million expansion of the Joan Weill Center For Dance, at 405 W. 55th St. at Ninth Ave.

will add three floors to the west side of the building, according to a press release. The expansion will add four dance studios, two flexible classrooms and administrative offices, and renovate existing lounges, locker rooms, restrooms, and the company's costume shop.

The \$25 million expansion is slated to open in fall 2017, according to a spokesperson.

In May 2015, Community Board 4 denied a variance for the expansion, which

AILEY EXTENSION continued on p. 10



Photo by Kyle Froman

Robin Dunn (center) has taught at the Ailey Extension since it launched in 2005.



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the Board of Standards and Appeals eventually approved. When asked about this, Johnson-Willingham said that “any changes we’re going to communicate [to the community] throughout the expansion and construction.”

She added, “This community has been so supportive and great coming into the building and taking classes.”

Johnson-Willingham called it a “win-win situation” for the extension to have instructors who live in the neighborhood.

Peter Brandenhoff has been teaching ballet classes at the extension for beginners, advanced beginners and intermediate students for two years, and has lived in Hell’s Kitchen for about four.

Originally from Denmark, Brandenhoff studied at the Royal Danish Ballet School. After graduation, he moved to the United States in 1991, he told Chelsea Now in a phone interview. For 15 years, he was with the San Francisco Ballet, and got his first taste of teaching when the company did outreach in South Africa, he said.

At the extension, he teaches the basics of ballet with an emphasis on dancing, he said.



Photo by Kyle Froman

Peter Brandenhoff works with a student during one of his ballet classes.

“Ballet is hard because it has a very slow progression,” Brandenhoff explained.

Especially for adult classes, he tries to incorporate an element of athleticism. Ballet, he said, can be difficult to do once your body has gotten settled.

For Brandenhoff, the most rewarding part of teaching is “when I see somebody figure something out — how to master a step — that’s the best thing there is. To see the smile on their faces and the light

in their eyes — priceless.”

When he moved to New York City five years ago, he tried other neighborhoods and boroughs before settling in Hell’s Kitchen. He said he tries to get his neighbors to come to his class, especially when at one of his favorite haunts, Kahve, a coffee shop at 774 Ninth Ave. (btw. W. 51st & W. 52nd Sts.).

“I do my best to recruit people when I’ve been there,” he said.

Preconceived notions about ballet — tights are required, you have to have a special body type, or be able to do the splits — make it harder to pitch to people than, say a Zumba or a spin class, he said.

No tights are required for his classes at the extension, Brandenhoff noted.

“One of the things that sets the Ailey Extension apart in my experience is [the students] like having a good time; they like taking risks,” he said.

He said that is indicative of people who live in Hell’s Kitchen with many residents who are still young at heart.

A cardiovascular workout from dance is key for Sarina Jain, an instructor at the Ailey Extension since 2009 and the creator of a workout called Masala Bhangra — “the original Indian dance program,” Jain said in a phone interview.

Her parents came to the United States in the 1970s from India, and Jain was born and raised in California. She created the Masala Bhangra Workout in honor of her father, who died when he was 47, she said. “I found my calling when everything happened with my dad,” she explained.

Jain called the workout “old-school aerobics meets India,” and says she takes the class on a journey — channeling scenes from Bollywood movies. Class starts with a warm-up, and then Jain teaches a series of movement.



Photo by Joe Epstein

Ailey Extension Director Lisa Johnson-Willingham.

“We put it all together at the end and jam it out,” she said.

Jain says most anyone can pick up the choreography and then perform it, and that she doesn’t want anyone to walk out feeling frustrated by the moves.

She loves teaching at the extension, where she has had two classes per week since she started.

“The friendship[s] I have built there over the years [are] mind-blowing,” she said. “Something about the energy at the Ailey Extension stands out.”

Forging close ties with her students has been helped by Jain living in Chelsea since 2005, after moving to the city at the tail end of 2000. Jain loves the uniqueness of the shops and restaurants that still populate the neighborhood.

Her students push her to think about music selection, creating new steps and routines, and how she can challenge them.

“It’s such a satisfying feeling to know I make a difference in their world,” Jain said.

For more information about classes and times, visit aileyextension.com.



Photo by Christopher Duggan

Students from The Ailey School perform 2016’s “roofbreaking” ceremony for the Ailey Extension.

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BY HAROLD LLOYD

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October 25, 2016

NOW

RAPPER'S deLITE

This couple danced their way to slimmer frames, losing a combined 160 pounds

By RAQUEL LANERI

IT'S Monday night, and the studio at Alvin Ailey in Hell's Kitchen is bumping. A Missy Elliott song blares from the speakers as 30 hip-hop enthusiasts — ranging from 20-somethings to unassuming moms — high-step, glide and crisscross their arms.

But the most enthusiastic booty-shakers are Joseph Laino and George Junco, two middle-aged psychotherapists having the time of their lives.

"The first time I said I wanted to try hip-hop, George was like, 'You're crazy!'" says 49-year-old Laino, who was already taking Zumba classes at Ailey with Junco, his partner of 26 years. "But it ended up being life-changing."

The Sunset Park-based couple sweat it out at Ailey five times a week, dabbling in everything from hip-hop to house. Dancing has not only enhanced their social life, it's also bolstered their health, with the pair losing nearly 160 pounds collectively in two years.

"I was a 50 waist, maybe 52, when I first started," says Junco, 55. "Now I'm a 36."

Laino and Junco met in 1990 while working for a local youth shelter. Both men grew up in large immigrant families who spent weekends playing music and dancing, and the two bonded over that shared passion. Date nights included watching the New York City Ballet at Lincoln Center, then grooving at a nightclub downtown. But then graduate

Junco (left) and Laino each gained 100 pounds, and suffered from health issues, in the first 10 years of their relationship.

school, work and settling down took over.

"Our lives got so busy that dancing just kind of fell by the wayside," says Laino.

So did maintaining their trim waistlines. Sedentary hours working and studying meant late-night snacking and a dependence on fast food.

"I gained like 10 pounds a year the first 10 years we were together," Laino says. "All of a sudden I was 100 pounds overweight. I was like, 'Oh my god! How did this happen?'"

Both men had health issues, too. Junco, who had also gained about 100 pounds in those first 10 years, had suffered from high blood pressure since his 20s. In 2008, Laino was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, and by 2014, his health was dire. "My endocrinologist was like, 'You have got to start moving,'" he says.

A couple weeks later, as he and Junco were leaving a performance by the Alvin Ailey Company, Laino saw a flier advertising Zumba classes on Sunday mornings. Junco was skeptical, but Laino decided to give it a whirl.

"I absolutely loved it. I went home and said, 'George, this was like the best thing ever — you have got to come!'"

"The first time I took it, halfway through the class I thought I was going to have a heart attack," says Junco. But he was back the next week.

A month later, Laino suggested the couple try hip-hop, then house dancing. (He sticks with the street styles, while Junco has expanded his repertoire to include Afro-Cuban and ballet styles.)

All that moving had a big impact on their physiques: Junco, who also keeps track of what he eats through Weight Watchers, has shed 118 pounds and had his blood-pressure meds halved; Laino has lost 40 pounds, regulated his glucose levels, and can better manage his diabetes.

Their passion has also brought them together. "Dancing was something we had in common right from the beginning, but we lost track of that love," says Laino.

"To be able to find it again and find it together and to feel good doing it has been just terrific."

George Junco (left) and Joseph Laino bust a move at Alvin Ailey five times a week, taking classes ranging from hip-hop to Zumba.

Global HEARTBEAT

The world's music and dance styles combine in a life-affirming celebration. Get on your feet!

Words Kathryn StomsVik Photographs Christian Miles

Braat digga-digga dah DAH TAH! Our instructor, Babacar M'Baye, calls out the rhythm while demonstrating a complicated series of rapid footwork, turns, aerial kicks, effortless undulations, and decisive gestural accents.

We, his students, watch with a combination of awe, excitement, and perplexity. A broad grin spreads across his face as he says: "I'll break it down for you."

Sabar, one of the performance workshops offered in the Ailey Extension World Dance Celebration, is a unique dance from Senegal usually performed at special events such as weddings or the presentation of babies. The drummer holds a stick in one hand while playing with the other hand, creating the distinctive "crack" that echoes through the studio. The more you learn to sing the rhythm as you dance, the faster you understand it.

Many dancers consider sabar the most challenging class they've ever taken — and they can't get enough of it. Frequently airborne and fiercely assertive, it's not for the faint of heart, but the music and energetic movement are pure joy for the spirit.

Babacar was born in the Griot family of Wolof people in Senegal. A Griot is a member of a class of traveling poets, musicians, dancers, and artists whose role it is to maintain a tradition of oral history in West Africa. Dance is not only an occupation, it is a means by which traditions stay alive.

This year's World Dance Celebration represents dances from Africa, Brazil, Cuba, India, and the Middle East.

"The result is a class that feels like a party yet is efficiently run and fast paced."

Each workshop culminates in a public performance where dancers of any age, from beginner to professional, can present in their chosen technique. Some of these dances are strictly traditional; others are fused with more popular or western traditional techniques. It takes a good amount of courage to commit to nine weeks of rehearsals and two to four performances, but the rewards are life-changing, invigorating, and promote a closer understanding of one another through the power of dance.

The hugely popular West African dance is taught by Maguette Camara. The students are mostly dressed in traditional African lappas (a beautiful patterned material worn like a skirt). Maguette addresses his class with a calm and positive attitude. He smiles sincerely and begins to teach a challenging dance called Cuckoo. The students are impressively attentive and quickly absorb the movement.

After teaching each section, he drums the specific rhythm himself and the class performs the movement independently. His multi talent for music and dance are not uncommon in many African cultures where the two disciplines are frequently intertwined. Dance does not have borders.

Next Stop, Bollywood. Masala Bhangra



Left: West African dance class in full swing. **Above:** Sarina Jain leads the Masala Bhangra class.

continued
over

ARTS

has been voted one of the top five workouts in the US, and creator Sarina Jain's opening session could have been easily mistaken for a family reunion. Everyone was hugging and running to one another and the room was radiant with smiles.

First order of business: learn everyone's names – right now! Sarina learned and memorized the names of each of the 45 participants within a mere 10 minutes. Her personal attentiveness and appreciation for each individual instantly earned the respect of her students.

Next, she had everyone shake the hand of a person they didn't know and introduce themselves. "This person will be your partner for the rest of the workshop." She encourages her students to get together inside and outside of the studio, stressing that the group works as a team and helps each other. The result is a class that feels like a party yet is efficiently run and fast paced.

Masala Bhangra (spicy dance) has elements of classic Indian dance fused with the steps from popular Bollywood films. The movement is sexy, joyful, and very presentational. The class is composed of participants of all ages and cultural backgrounds, men and women.



Above: Sabar is colorful, rhythmic, and not for the faint-hearted.

Right: Instructor Babacar M'Baye

Below: Samba's seductive sway.



Everyone is having a blast. Dance is interaction.

Afro-Cuban dance is taught by Noibis Licea, a native of Bayamo, Cuba with a broad background in modern, ballet, Afro-Cuban dance, jazz, and acrobatics. Noibis begins with a structured warm-up that combines elements of African, Cuban, and modern dance.

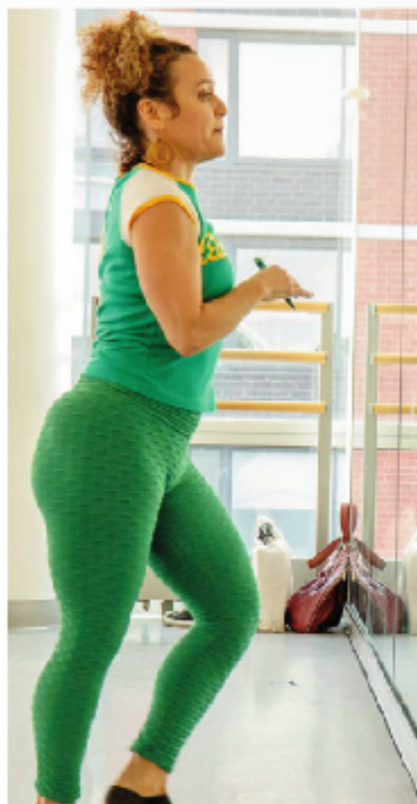
The dance has a specific rhythm 1-2, 1-2, 1-2-3-4-5, 1-2 ... and the motions are often downward, with the torso curved forward. The arms are at times gesturing symbols of everyday activities like throwing a fishing net and lifting the catch over the shoulders. Symbolic gestures are a key element in many of the World Dance workshops. Dance is an expression of life.

Bellydance is a subtle and articulate art that celebrates the sensuality of the female body. A true bellydancer is a self-assured woman who understands and appreciates her femininity. She is a sophisticated performer with incredible muscle control and theatrical mystique. In Groove Fit Bellydance, taught by the technique's originator Jannelle Cortes, women are encouraged to learn the movement not by

studying the footwork on the floor, but by confidently observing themselves in the mirror and discovering the subtle motion within. The process transforms students as they gain a fuller understanding of themselves and this alluring technique.

Jannelle is working with two groups. The first is the full company of students with movement that is somewhat confrontational and percussive while still exhibiting the seamless grace, undulations, and abdominal "flutters" we associate with the style. She refers to this group as "bellydance soldiers." Next, a smaller group of more advanced students pulls out brightly colored silken veils. This section is deeply mysterious and lyrical. Intrigued by the graceful flow of color and elegant motion, it is easy to understand how modern dance pioneer Ruth St. Dennis was inspired to create her hypnotic "Incense." Dance is empowering.

Last but far from least is samba, the celebrated dance from Brazil led by the bright spirited Quenia Ribeiro, a native of Rio de Janeiro. Quenia has been teaching ballet, modern dance, and Brazilian folkloric dance for more than 25 years. Her class is enjoyed by all ages and backgrounds.



Top: Afro Cuban dance is an expression of life. **Above:** Sabar often sees the dancers airborne. **Left:** The samba strut, as demonstrated by Quenia Ribeiro.



This workshop is accompanied by three percussionists playing a variety of instruments, creating a sound that is full and driving, and the dance is magnificent. The movement appears to be logical variations on the distinctive samba strut. Circularity is present throughout the body in the shoulders, arms, legs, hips, and torso giving the motions that seductive ease and sway. Quenia told me the group will have head dresses and full costume for the final performances. Dance is uplifting.

Lisa Johnson-Willington, director of Ailey Extension, says her favorite part about directing this program is going to the performances and seeing family and friends waiting for the dancers after the show presenting flowers and expressing their pride and excitement.

Quoting Alvin Ailey himself, she says: "I believe that dance came from the people and that it should be delivered back to the people."

And the World Dance Celebration offers the opportunity for anyone, regardless of age or ability, to experience dance as a global extension of ourselves.

World Dance Celebration, Ailey Citigroup Theater, June 11 and 12 (www.alvinailey.org)

TimeOut

January 20–February 2, 2016

Notable New Yorkers tell us how to beat the cold-weather blues

By Tolly Wright

January 20, 2016



"Something that keeps me warm during the winter is Maguette Camara's West African class. It's an incredible experience, guaranteed to move your spirit."

JEROBOAM BOZEMAN COMPANY MEMBER, ALVIN AILEY
AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

Shake off winter while shakin' your whole body at choreographer Maguette Camara's open-level class. You may be standing in a lovely Ailey Extension dance studio, but Camara, who emigrated from Senegal, transports his class as he teaches the significance and meaning behind the dances. Try your damndest to do the traditional movements he patiently demonstrates, which include joyous sweeping gestures and fast steps found in ceremonial dances from regions in Senegal, Mali, Guinea and the Ivory Coast. The infectious energy of the live drum helps even the least coordinated step to the beat. 405 W 55th St (212-405-9000, alvinailey.org). Fri at 6:30pm; \$20/class.



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NEWS

► Julie Halston



UPDATE

THE ACTORS' EQUITY FOUNDATION announced May 7 that the 2015 Clarence Derwent Awards for the most promising NYC-based female and male actors will be given to Phillipa Soo ("Hamilton") and Josh Grisetti ("It Shoulda Been You"), while the veteran performer Richard Seff Awards will recognize Julie Halston ("You Can't Take It With You") and Brad Oscar ("Something Rotten!").



The Ailey Extension's Masala Bhangra

N.Y. DANCE

Shake Ya Body

FIVE DANCE CLASSES TO TAKE AT ALVIN AILEY

BY BRIANA RODRIGUEZ

Amid sweeping views of Midtown Manhattan, the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation is committing to its founder's mission of bringing dance to the people with the Ailey Extension. May is National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, and the studio is offering "real classes for real people" in its 12 studios.

The Extension offers over 80 classes for everyone from beginners to the more advanced in over 25 dance and fitness practices. Offerings include the standard fare of jazz, Zumba, ballet, yoga, and Pilates, as well as some unexpected ones. Here are just five of its many classes.

THE AILEY BARRE

This newly created class is an exclusive designed to "increase your flexibility and

exude power and grace" so you can get that "classic Ailey body." Sarita Allen—a former Ailey principal dancer and current artistic advisor at Complexions Contemporary Ballet—leads Barre, which utilizes resistance bands that can be tailored to various body strengths, and yoga straps and blocks for proper alignment. The class is offered Thursdays, 6-7 p.m.

DANZATONE

This high-intensity dance workout targets muscle building as well as cardio, and incorporates flowing stretches to the beats of merengue, bachata, mambo, reggaeton, hip-hop, and more. But this isn't Zumba—participants do less jumping around and more squats and other exercises to get a serious burn in the thighs and glutes. Attend DanzaTone Saturdays 9:30-10:30 a.m. with

dancer and certified fitness instructor Jose Manuel Ozuna.

MASALA BHANGRA

Created by Sarina Jain, the "Indian Jane Fonda," this Bollywood-inspired dance form channels both feminine and masculine moves from some of India's most popular films. "The Masala Bhangra Workout is a complete cardiovascular workout that blends traditional Bhangra dance steps with the exhilaration of Bollywood moves," according to a statement. Designed to provide toning to build endurance, balance, and stamina, the moves are surprisingly intuitive, making it easy for beginners to jump in. Get your Bollywood on Mondays 8-9 p.m. and Saturdays 10:35-11:25 a.m.

CAPOEIRA

Originating in Brazil, this dance technique combines acrobatics and martial arts. After practicing continuously, capoeira dancers improve their posture, flexibility, strength, and cardiovascular health. It's offered at the beginner, intermediate, and advanced level on Tuesdays at 8 p.m., and Thursdays and Fridays at 7:30 p.m.

HORTON

Designed by Lester Horton, Ailey's mentor, this modern dance technique focuses on strengthening and stretching to "correct physical faults and prepare you for any type of dancing you may wish to follow," according to the Extension's website. Horton classes are offered every day of the week except Thursdays.

This summer the Extension will also introduce beginner tap classes, African Dance Workouts, outdoor yoga, and Afro Flow Yoga. No membership is required and classes start at \$18.50 if purchased online, with two for \$30 for first-time students. For a complete class schedule, visit aileyextension.com. **b**

DR.OZ THE GOOD LIFE

Dr. Oz's The Good Life | December 2014

HEALTHY BODY

"My daughter pulled me out of the health danger zone."

THE SUCCESS STORY

CATHY GIPSON, 62

**Lost 50 pounds
(and her cholesterol is
down 100 points!)**

"For more than a year, my daughter Karen kept asking me to come to a Zumba class she teaches, but I always gave her an excuse. I was on three blood pressure medications, and I had no energy to do anything but lie on the couch. Plus, I'm stubborn. Karen finally got my attention when she stopped asking. Instead, she told me, 'I have a client your age, and she's a rock star in class.' I thought, *If that woman can do it, so can I.* The first class, I was all left feet and couldn't keep up. But the other people were so supportive—they made it OK to be a beginner. I kept going back, and quickly started to enjoy myself. I've dropped three dress sizes and got off all my blood pressure meds!"

"I'm so proud of my mom."

THE NUDGER

KAREN ARCENEUX, 42

"When my mom first started working out, she couldn't do a single push-up. She did 120 in an exercise class recently!"



July 24, 2013

HEALTH

Dance for the people at the Ailey Extension

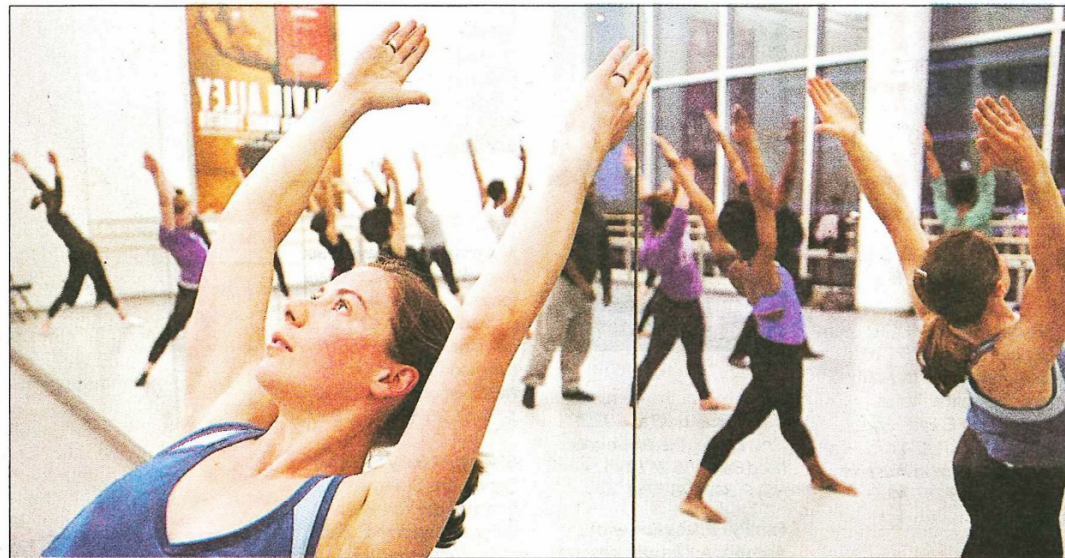
BY SHEILA ANNE FEENEY
sheila.feeneey@am-ny.com

All nonprofit organizations have a difficult time in these profit-ravenous times, but the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has a hidden weapon: its thriving Ailey Extension program, which offers classes in more than 30 different dance techniques — Zumba, ballet, Capoeira, hip-hop, samba, Horton, tap, jazz and bhangra among them — to the public in about 80 classes a week.

Prices are reasonable — \$17 per 60- or 90-minute class (with volume discounts available) — and instruction is by some of the top teachers in NYC.

The Ailey Extension program, which is open to anyone who wants to go, “matches our mission,” said Lisa Johnson-Willingham, Ailey Extension director. Ailey believed “that dance comes from the people and should be delivered back to the people,” which classes help to do.

Johnson-Willingham dances around the topic of the degree to which Ailey Extension helps to defray costs, but acknowledges



Students take the Horton class at Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Extension program for nonprofessional dancers.

that 300 people a day receiving instruction in the spacious studios helps to support the company.

Esther Hsiang, 23, who lives in midtown, was first exposed to the Horton technique at Harvard University, and continued to take classes even after landing a job as a strategy consultant in NYC. Horton, she said, makes her body feel “long and limber.”

“It makes your body very strong,” she said.

But can a nondancer hack the rigors of an Ailey class?

Recently, this reporter took an Ailey Extension class in the Horton technique — taught, coincidentally, by Johnson-Willingham — to find out. Originated by Lester Horton, who was adored by Ailey, the Horton technique is evident in many of Ailey's choreographed works, most markedly “Revelations.”

Designed to fortify, lengthen and strengthen the

body, Horton is rhythm enriched, and incorporates dance elements from many different cultures.

About 50 people of astonishingly different levels of ability showed up to stretch, move and eventually learn a set of increasingly challenging combinations. The vibe was friendly and welcoming, with the less adept and nervous clustering in the back (hello!) as the Horton regulars and more practiced dancers took positions in front.

Johnson-Willingham guided us through a series of fairly manageable ballet positions and T positions, “table top flat back,” squats, swings and lunges. The rhythmic, dynamic moves, with transitions much like those in yoga, became progressively more difficult. Holding a squat while on tiptoe put my muscles in a mercy-begging mood. Just as the Pilates-like floor work was giving me new insight into the inadequacies

Dancer notes

If you're just starting out: **Consider the introductory offer** (two classes for \$25) to sample classes and figure out where you belong level-wise.

Don't sweat the dress. People wear everything from ballet leotards to shorts and dress shirts. Just dress to move comfortably and make sure to check the required footwear. Most people in Horton were barefoot.

Show up early. It takes a few minutes to check in, and there's almost always a line. Classes may be crowded, so you should stake out some prime floor space. (SHEILA ANNE FEENEY)

of my abdominal strength, we were given a rest before instruction in some briskly performed combinations. That is where the real dancers broke away from the pack, leaving the rest of us in their wake.

But it also felt all right to be mediocre. The class may be at a world-renowned center for dancers, but snobby “dance world” airs were absent. And yes, I emerged feeling terrific: stronger, taller and more limber.

April 6, 2012

Urban Athlete

Sweating to an African Beat

By JULIA LAWLOR

MY love of West African dance far exceeds my capabilities as a practitioner. No matter. Fifteen years had passed since my last class, and I was ready for another try. So one recent afternoon I wrapped a piece of African cloth around my waist and entered a packed studio at the Alvin Ailey extension center in Manhattan.

This was an all-levels class, which theoretically meant beginners were welcome. But the crowd — mostly women, with a few brave men — seemed fairly proficient.

My pasty Irish skin was no anomaly: the class of 30 or so represented many ethnicities and, equally refreshing, a range of body types. As at most African dance classes, there were drummers; by the halfway point, a total of eight had appeared with their djembes, hand drums made of animal skin stretched over a wooden base).

In West Africa, as throughout the continent, traditional dance might celebrate a birth, a harvest, a wedding or a coming of age or appease an especially irascible spirit. Always, there are the drums, played with hands and sticks. The dancers' job is to interpret the language of the drums and to respond to certain rhythms, or "breaks," that signify when a step should start or stop.

Unlike, say, ballet, in which the torso is held rigidly and the positions of the arms, hands and feet are strictly prescribed, African dance allows more freedom. Heads bob, arms flail, backs flex, and the upper and lower body are often moving to different rhythmic patterns. Feet are bare, and blisters are part of the price of admission. Throw in a few hops and leaps, and you have a vigorous, fast-paced aerobic workout.

I was wiping the sweat from my brow soon after our teacher, Vado Diomande, led us in warm-up exercises. He spent 15 years as a dancer for the national ballet in Ivory Coast, his native country, and he is also a master drum maker. His

strength, for a 51-year-old, was astonishing — at one point, he dropped to the floor and held a plank position, bent his elbows as if to perform a push-up, then hopped across the floor several times without breaking form.

He taught us a celebratory dance called koukou, which is practiced in various forms throughout West Africa. Breaking it down into easy-to-learn chunks, he went over each combination, then began to string them together. We practiced the entire dance several times, and just as I was beginning to get the hang of it, he stopped. He told us that we would perform it again at the end of class — twice if we didn't get it right the first time — and that we would now move on to the next phase of class.

That involved dividing us into groups of four. Each group moved across the floor from one end of the studio to the other while performing a step he had demonstrated. Then we returned to the back of the line and repeated the pattern with a different combination.

This part of class tends to raise the anxiety level in beginners like me because of its potential for maximum exposure (and embarrassment). But I also found it exhilarating when Mr. Dio-

mande demonstrated a step that I picked up easily, successfully making my way across the floor to the beat of the drums.

As the combinations grew more complex, I slipped out of line and observed from the sidelines. (Mr. Diomande explained later that if he didn't throw in some difficult steps, his more advanced students would "just stay home.")

Patricia Seabrooks, one of Mr. Diomande's regulars from the Bronx, took my hand and pulled me back into line. She showed me the step until I could execute it with confidence. Later, when Mr. Diomande noticed that I was lost, he moved directly in front of me and repeated the combination.

Class ended with a procession in front of the drummers. Students bent down one by one, bowed their heads and touched the floor in front of each drum. Mr. Diomande explained that this was a traditional way of honoring the spirit of the instrument.

A few brave souls then did solo celebration dances as the rest of us clapped along, hoping that any remaining irritable spirits had been thoroughly appeased.



CHESTER HIGGINS JR./THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Ailey Extension offers five beginning West African dance classes per week for \$16.50 each; 405 West 55th Street, Clinton; (212) 405-9500, aileyextension.com.

Vado Diomande leads his Alvin Ailey Extension West African dance class.

The New York Times

January 13, 2012

Urban Athlete

A Wedding Dance That's Also a Workout



VICTOR BLUE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Shawn Kakar dancing at the Basement Bhangra event at S.O.B.'s. Several gyms in New York offer bhangra classes.

By SHIVANI VORA

ATENDING Indian weddings and ending up the night sweaty and tired from hours of bhangra dancing have been regular parts of my weekend repertory since I was a child. The catchy music can entice even the most die-hard wallflower to move. But though my heart beats fast, and my legs end up sore, I've never thought of bhangra as a workout.

Apparently I'm behind the times. Dance studios, gyms and clubs in New York City and beyond focus on the fitness aspects of bhangra, a centuries-old folk dance from northern India that farmers still perform to celebrate the harvest.

Today bhangra is also an Indian wedding staple only vaguely resembling its humble roots; it has morphed into a series of high-energy moves that test the stamina of any regular gymgoer (and are a feature of the dancing in Bollywood movies). The dancing is usually punctuated with joyous shouts of "balle balle," the Hindi version of "woo-hoo."

If you don't have an invitation to an Indian wedding, the best place to experience bhangra in a party atmosphere is at Basement Bhangra, a monthly event at S.O.B.'s in Lower Manhattan, where the dancing stretches until 3 in the

Where to 'Balle Balle'

Some places to get moving:

THE AILEY EXTENSION aileyextension.com.

BASEMENT BHANGRA djrekha.com.

CRUNCH crunch.com.

MASALA BHANGRA CLASSES masaladance.com.

NEW YORK SPORTS CLUB nysc.com.

Y.M.C.A. ymcanyc.org.

morning. It starts with a free lesson in the moves, like pushing the arms toward the ceiling in rapid succession or doing a squat four times on the beat while the arms are to the sides, and the elbows extended.

"Yes, it's a party," said Rekha Malhotra, better known as DJ Rekha, who created this event. "But from a fitness perspective, bhangra is an all-out sport and very much a cardio workout with all the jumping up and down and other moves that are involved."

Basement Bhangra can be quite intense. Enthusiastic dancers drip with sweat as they squat, jump and raise their arms.

New Yorkers who like the idea of bhangra but aren't into the late-night scene can try the Masala Bhangra

classes at the Ailey Extension, part of the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation. The moves in these hourlong sessions aren't complicated, and even the most uncoordinated can follow along.

A move called the dhol beat, for example, involves pulling down the arms while stamping one foot. And in another move, the classic bhangra, participants move side to side while they kick their heels to their glutes as if they were doing a hamstring curl.

Sarina Jain is the creator of the Masala Bhangra workout. (She also teaches classes at Ailey, as well as at Crunch and New York Sports Club). She said she developed it as a way to celebrate her Indian culture and to honor her father, who died of cardiac arrest when he was 48. "I want these classes to be a way to help people live longer," she said.

Maria Zoccoli, 51, a Hoboken resident and a sales executive for a clothing manufacturer, became a regular at Ailey's bhangra classes after watching them for several months while waiting for her Zumba classes to begin. She finally decided to give one a try and was hooked.

"My arms have more definition, and my legs are much stronger," she said. "And the upbeat music and high-energy moves make for an exhilarating workout."