

# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

## *Ailey Classics Program*

This special program brings highlights from Mr. Ailey's wonderfully rich body of work to life.

### ACT ONE

***Memoria* (1979)** "In Memory" excerpt

**Composer: Keith Jarrett**

In the tumultuous time of 1979 when Mr. Ailey's great, perennial friend from his Lester Horton days, choreographer Joyce Trisler died prematurely, he began choreographing *Memoria*. Later, he wrote, "*Memoria* is about Joyce's life, my memories of her, my image of her. Although these are very abstract images, nobody has ever asked me what *Memoria* is about. People everywhere understand it. Making the dance was a very deep and wrenching experience for me."



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in  
Alvin Ailey's *Memoria*.  
Photo by Paul Kolnik

***Night Creature* (1974)** "Movement II" & "Movement III" excerpts

**Composer: Duke Ellington**

A bubbly champagne cocktail of a dance, *Night Creature* perfectly fuses Alvin Ailey's buoyant choreography and Duke Ellington's sparkling music in a definitive homage to The Duke's jazz that remains one of Mr. Ailey's most popular works. Ellington said, "night creatures, unlike stars, do not come OUT at night— they come ON, each thinking that, before the night is out, he or she will be the star."

### ACT TWO

***Pas de Duke* (1976)** "Such Sweet Thunder" excerpt

**Composer: Duke Ellington**

Alvin Ailey's modern dance translation of a classical pas de deux captures the sassy sophistication of Duke Ellington's jazz music. The choreography is elegant and deliciously flirtatious, showing off the dancers' exuberance and virtuosity as they engage in a playful game of one-upmanship. Created for Judith Jamison and Mikhail Baryshnikov, *Pas de Duke* was first presented in 1976 as part of Lincoln Center's "Ailey Celebrates Ellington" festival.



Ailey's Yannick Lebrun and Constance Stamatou in  
Alvin Ailey's *Pas de Duke*. Photo by Paul Kolnik

***Masekela Langage* (1969)** "Morolo" excerpt

**Composer: Hugh Masekela**

*Masekela Langage*, a rarely-seen Ailey masterpiece, is set in a shebeen (a South African beer house) and danced to the driving score of South African jazz composer and trumpeter Hugh Masekela. Ailey's choreography speaks of passivity, militancy, despair, and defiance in a searing portrait of oppression during the apartheid era, drawing parallels between events in South Africa and the race-induced violence in Chicago during the 1960s.

***Opus McShann* (1988)** "Doo Wah Doo" excerpts

**Composer: Jay McShann and Walter Brown**

A choreographic portrait of Jay McShann, the "great practitioner of the Kansas City jazz piano style and living legacy of Kansas City jazz," *Opus McShann* conveys the various styles this jazz master exudes through his music. From the sexy, beguiling duet in "Gee Baby Ain't I Good to You," to the comical meandering in "Doo Wah Doo," *Opus McShann* presents the jazz doctor as a modern day African American icon with whom everyone can relate. The original Ailey dancers who first performed this piece studied swing, lindy-hop, and the jitterbug to perfect this lively and upbeat ballet's movement style.

***Love Songs*** (1972) “A Song For You” excerpt

**Composer: Leon Russell**

*Love Songs*, a three-part technical and dramatic tour-de-force originally created for the legendary Dudley Williams, is often viewed as the male counterpart to *Cry*. This lyrical solo offers an emotional journey through love and longing, set to a suite of songs recorded by Donny Hathaway and Nina Simone.

***For Bird – With Love*** (1984) “A Night in Tunisia” excerpt

**Composer: Dizzy Gillespie**

Mr. Ailey’s theme is the artist in conflict with society, as the ballet depicts the life of legendary jazz musician Charlie Parker. In this theatrically impressive section filled with elaborate props, costumes and sets, Charlie Parker invites Dizzy Gillespie to a club, and highlights a snapshot of the duo’s real-life relationship.



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in  
Alvin Ailey’s *For Bird – With Love*.  
Photo by Paul Kolnik

***Reflections in D*** (1962)

**Composer: Duke Ellington**

Alvin Ailey originally created this stunning, masterful expression of Duke Ellington’s music as a strong yet serene solo for himself in 1962. Traditionally known to highlight the grace, artistry, and power of the male dancer, Judith Jamison calls the three-minute ballet “a tone poem, a quiet, sparking jewel.” It has been performed over the years by some of the most formidable Ailey dancers, including Dudley Williams and Matthew Rushing, and this year will be performed by female soloists.

***For Bird – With Love*** (1984) “Bird Lives” excerpt

**Composer: Dizzy Gillespie**

Mr. Ailey’s theme is the artist in conflict with society, as the ballet depicts the life of legendary jazz musician Charlie Parker. In this theatrically impressive section filled with elaborate props, costumes and sets, Charlie Parker invites Dizzy Gillespie to a club, and highlights a snapshot of the duo’s real-life relationship.

## **ACT THREE**

***Revelations*** (1960)

**Spirituals**

An American classic acclaimed as a must-see for all, Alvin Ailey’s signature masterpiece is a tribute to his heritage and genius. Choreographed when he was only 29 years old, *Revelations* is an intimate reflection that explores the emotional spectrum of the human condition, from the deepest of grief to the holiest joy. Using African American religious spirituals, this suite is a classic tribute to the resolve and determination of a people. *Revelations* has been seen by more people around the world than any other work of modern dance.



Ailey’s Solomon Dumas, Khalia Campbell  
and Samantha Figgins in Alvin Ailey’s  
*Revelations*. Photo by Paul Kolnik