



## Black Voices: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Dancers Return to Chicago Stage

By: Angel Idowu

March 6, 2022



This segment aired on 3/6/22: <https://news.wttw.com/2022/03/06/alvin-ailey-american-dance-theater-dancers-return-chicago-stage> (3:50 minutes)

It was at Chicago's Auditorium Theatre where dancers with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater would unknowingly perform for the last time before a nearly two-year hiatus. Fast forward to today, and they're back on their first national tour.

"In this reemergence, we come back even more resilient and defiant and mission driven ... to be able to do what Ailey said he was trying to do in the first place," said Artistic Director Robert Battle. "He said what I'm trying to do is hold the mirror up to society so that people can see how beautiful they are."

This tour commemorates Battle's 10-year anniversary in his role, featuring nearly every work he's choreographed since joining the company. "There's a song by Nina Simone with a love story ... a dance to the music of Stevie Wonder and a work called Ella to Ella Fitzgerald ... it's really varied and shows the varied nature of the company," Battle said.

Chicago native and company dancer, Solomon Dumas agrees. He says Battle's work is reflective of Ailey's goal to create a company that celebrates the full African diaspora. Dumas says he's excited to share those stories on stage again. "His work speaks to the diversity in Black voices. That's what sets us apart and keeps us moving in these hard times," Dumas said. "The joy comes in the work. Being back on stage is something I can't even explain or articulate."

From classical modern to contemporary African, to hip hop and jazz, Battle says he hopes the audience will feel the "full gamut" of the company's range.

"That you feel when you leave the company you had an experience of all the senses. Not just visually. But the music, the drama, the history, the culture ... what we've been through," Battle said. "The shoulders of which we stand on to tell our story. So it's mission driven." That mission is reflected in many hours of rehearsal with very little down time. But Dumas says he'd take that over virtual rehearsals any day. "The beauty of being a performing artist and performing Mr. Ailey's work ... and being a part of bringing dance back to the people is hard to articulate," Dumas said. "But it's the therapy I didn't know I had." Whether it be newer works choreographed by Battle or Alvin Ailey originals, the group is confident their return to the stage will be well received.

"Dance comes from the people and should always be delivered back to the people," Battle said. "I think that's why people relate to this company so much. Even 60 years later."

For a deeper look at Ailey's work, [view "American Masters: Ailey" on PBS.](#)