

# EBONY

## The Ailey Spirit Gala at New York Lincoln's Center Highlighted Choreographer Hope Boykin Masterful New Work

By: Delaina Dixon

May 31, 2023



The one- night-only Ailey Spirit Gala, which benefits the Ailey organization's extensive educational and training programs for young people, was held for the first time at Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City. Led by Artistic Director [Robert Battle](#), the evening celebrated the art and soul of dance. A powerful new piece created specifically for the occasion by choreographer and former Ailey company member [Hope Boykin](#) featured [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater](#) and Ailey II dancers, students from The Ailey School, and youngsters from AileyCamp, the organization's dance and personal development summer enrichment program.



"That sense of legacy, from the little ones on through the main company, Alvin Ailey really was creating family, community and a sense of belonging," Battle shared with EBONY at the start of the festivities. "That's what I want people to feel from the audience, a sense of connection and belonging."

Grammy award-winning singer-songwriter, activist and Golden Globe-winning actress [Andra Day](#) served as honorary chair for the evening. The "Rise Up" songstress revealed how taking Ailey workshops as a child, "helped me to see my potential and the options of the other things I could do in my life." Hosting the evening was her full-circle moment. "I'm very grateful to Ailey and it's very important to be a part of it," she shared. The night began with West African drumming, followed by an exhilarating demonstration from Ailey Extension. Participating in the Gala performance for the first time ever, these general public students drummed and danced in a piece entitled *Djoutalla*, led by Ailey instructor Maguette Camara. The world premiere of *Chasing The Spirit* by Hope Boykin captured the essence of one generation passing on the knowledge of movement and joy to the next.

"I didn't have the chance to meet Mr. Ailey," shared the choreographer. "All of these people who are still a part of the organization who knew him have imparted his spirit into me. So what I've learned from them, I pass on to the young people." The production culminated with uplifting excerpts from Alvin Ailey's iconic and culturally significant ballet, *Revelations*.

*Good Morning America* host Robin Roberts told EBONY, "When it comes to civil rights ... Alvin Ailey who, through his heart and through dance, was able to express to the world the beauty of our culture with such great grace and grit."

*Titans'* Damaris Lewis revealed her favorite part of *Revelations*. "The umbrella in ["the Wade in the Water" section] always gets me," she declared. "I think, as a kid, seeing the visual effect of them creating the water (with long colored sashes) was very big for me. It still has a deep place in my heart." [Lion Babe](#)'s Jillian Hervey and actress Karen Pittman also attended the gala. After the performance, dancers, Ailey educators and trustees, and special guests flocked to The Appel Room for a festive soirée with musical stylings from DJ M.O.S.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater returns to the [Brooklyn Academy of Music](#) in New York City from June 6, 2023, through June 11, 2023.





View Ebony's Instagram post featuring Hope Boykin [here](#).