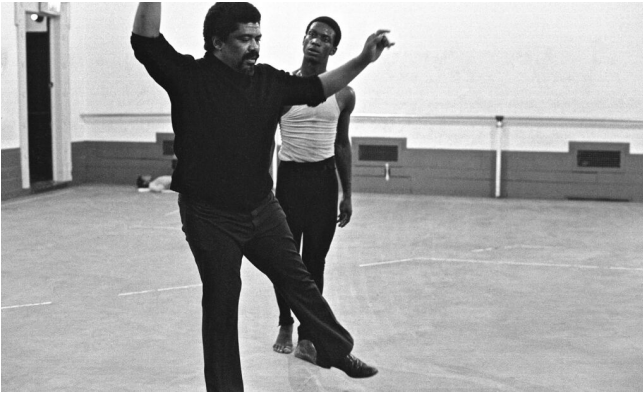


Connecting Dancer Alvin Ailey's Life Story with Classrooms



Acclaimed choreographer Alvin Ailey infused his life story and Black cultural roots into his modern dance works, which have been enjoyed by millions since he first founded Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1958 in New York City. Early dances such as *Revelations* remain favorites in the company repertory today, but many people don't know the background of the artist, who died in 1989.

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and The WNET Group's Kids' Media and Education team have embarked on an exciting new collaboration to bring new video and related educational materials about Alvin Ailey to educators around the country. The new resources use the film "Portrait of Ailey" to connect high school classrooms to Ailey's life story and to provide information on how to analyze and

understand the art of dance. The materials are available on PBS LearningMedia, a dynamic website that offers preK-12 educators access to thousands of resources from PBS stations and partners.

"I wanted to do the kind of dance that could be done for the man on the streets, the people. I wanted to show Black people that they could come down to these concert halls. That it was part of their culture being done there. And that it was universal."

As a public media provider, The WNET Group's mission includes connecting New York City's outstanding arts organizations with audiences nationwide, and to inform, educate and entertain. The film "Portrait of Ailey," produced by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and associated education materials can be used by teachers around the U.S., with guidance on how the resources meet each state's learning standards for grades 9 through 12. The film reveals a thoughtful artist who drew on life experience to create dance, and also followed his curiosity into the unknown. It will be presented in eight parts; two—Alvin Ailey's Texas Roots and Alvin Ailey's California Inspirations—are available now.

Ailey's early years unfolded on the edges of the U.S. before he became a central figure of modern dance, touring the world with his company. He was raised in poverty in 1930s Texas, picking cotton as a small child and loving blues and gospel music. Ailey spent his teenage years in California, studying dance with modern dance pioneer Lester Horton and performing in his early 20s with Carmen de Lavallade and Maya Angelou. He moved to New York City in 1954.



The U.S. government chose Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater to represent American dance on sponsored tours in Asia and Australia in 1962, and in China in 1985. Ailey's choreography was broadcast around the globe when he set *Revelations* on the Ballet Folklórico for the opening ceremonies of the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, the first Olympics broadcast live and in color. The company tours internationally to this day, performing the works of Ailey and contemporary choreographers.

The new education resources on PBS LearningMedia supports the aim of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater to "allow a new generation of students to learn more about Ailey as a dancer, choreographer, celebrity, teacher, social activist, dance ambassador, arts advocate, and supporter of new choreographic voices and visions."

The mission of the Kids' Media and Education team at WNET is to expand minds, ignite curiosity, and help children become confident and caring people. It creates video and interactive projects for multiple platforms, infusing fun with a range of curriculum-based content for kids from preschool through high school. Its projects exploring STEM, social/emotional development, language learning, history, global understanding, social justice, and the arts spark imagination, encourage critical thinking, and reflect diverse perspectives. The Kids' Media and Education team has partnered with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater as well as with the Liberty Science Center in Jersey City, NJ, and the American Classic Orchestra, among other nonprofit groups.

The WNET Group is proud to share New York City's vibrant and unparalleled arts scene and history with young people around the country through PBS Learning Media.