

THE BALTIMORE SUN

City school students practice dance moves with Ailey pros

By Brittany Britto

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More than 30 Baltimore public school students leapt into their dancing dreams Monday during a modern dance master class taught by professionals from the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Alvin Ailey dancers Jacqueline Green — also a Baltimore School for the Arts alumna — and Bowie native Daniel Harder, who perform Tuesday and Wednesday at the Modell Performing Arts Center at The Lyric, taught modern dance techniques to the students in a Lyric dance studio. They kicked off the class with stretches and demi- and grand-pliés to "I Would Die 4 U" by the late music icon Prince, followed by a practice run of circular figure eights. They taught a brief version of the opening of "Revelations," an acclaimed piece created by dance company founder and choreographer Alvin Ailey in 1960.

Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake selected the participants as part of the Mondays with the Mayor program. The students in the master class, offered at various stops during the Alvin Ailey tour, were chosen based on short dance videos submitted to the mayor's office.

Ten-year-old Sage Chng-Lim could be seen front and center for most of the class.

"It was cool and awesome," said Sage, who came with his 16-year-old cousin and Baltimore School for the Arts student Ui-seng Francois, who has been dancing since the third grade.

"It was really cool to learn from the people who dance in the show, and getting to watch them," said Ui-seng, who hopes to pursue the performing arts. "Some things were challenging, but dancing is just fun."

"You are training and trying to learn, so this is a safe space to make mistakes," Harder reminded students. "This is a no judgment zone ... We mess up. It's just our job to not let you know it."

"Be you. Show off what is beautiful and glorious about each and every one of you," he said.

The mayor left early for an event at Everyman Theatre but introduced Harder and Green to the audience.

Craig Revelle, 18, is a student from Carver Vocational-Technical High School who hopes to one day own his own dance company.

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience that I get to take the class with the actual dancers," said Revelle, who has seen the dance company perform in New York and Towson.

Harder and Green were just as excited.

"The exchange is always so special because the dance studio is a sacred space," Harder said. "It is a very special exchange between teacher and student. ... I always feel like I come away with just as much."

For Green, who helped Harder demonstrate different dance moves, the experience was nostalgic.



"They felt like family already," said Green, emphasizing that both the Maryland natives missed home.

The company's show and master class scheduled in Baltimore last year were canceled because of the unrest following the death of Freddie Gray.

"It was so upsetting. ... It feels good to be home on that stage in front of people that we know," Green said.

As for the students, Green said a superstar could have been in their midst.

"You really never know," Harder said.

"If you're passionate about it ... and this is what makes you happy, keep going. Mr. Ailey has a quote: 2 percent talent and 98 percent hard work," Green said. "And if you put in that hard work, you can make it."

If you go

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater: 7:30 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday. Modell Performing Arts Center at the Lyric, 140 W. Mount Royal Ave. \$30-\$75. ticketmaster.com

Watch video here:

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/entertainment/arts/bs-ae-ailey-master-class-20160425-story.html>