



CULTURAL
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ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

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ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER'S 18th ANNUAL WASHINGTON, D.C. OPENING NIGHT GALA BENEFIT AT JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR PERFORMING ARTS – TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 7TH

Opera House Performance Features Artistic Director Robert Battle's *Ella*, Celebrating Ella Fitzgerald's Birth Centennial

Dinner and Dancing Follows on the Terrace Level with Dancers and Guests

Ailey's Week-Long Engagement February 7 - 12 is Part of *JFKC: A Centennial Celebration of John F. Kennedy*



Executive Director Bennett Rink, Artistic Director Robert Battle and 2016 D.C. Gala Co-Chairs. Photo by James Brantley.

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(Washington) January 31, 2017 – On Tuesday, February 7th, [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's 18th Annual Washington, D.C. Opening Night Gala Benefit](#) will celebrate the opening of its yearly [week-long engagement at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts](#). After the 7pm opening program at the Opera House featuring performances celebrating the **birth centennials of jazz legends Ella Fitzgerald and Dizzy Gillespie** and **Alvin Ailey's** always inspiring masterpiece [Revelations](#), Artistic Director Robert Battle and Ailey's renowned dancers will join guests for supper and dancing on the Terrace Level of the Kennedy Center.

The evening's premieres and new productions include: **Robert Battle's** [Ella](#), a tour-de-force duet celebrating Ella Fitzgerald's birth centennial and set to her virtuosic scating in the song "Airmail Special"; **Billy Wilson's** [The Winter in Lisbon](#), an energetic, romantic and colorful tribute to the consummate jazz musician on his centenary highlighting four decades of his brilliant music; and **Johan Inger's** heart-stopping [Walking Mad](#), a daring contemporary take on Maurice Ravel's *Boléro* imaginatively employing a long, movable wall symbolizing the barriers people construct in their relationships.

The 2017 Opening Night Gala Benefit Co-Chairs include Gina F. Adams, Lyndon K. Boozer, Sela Collins and Debra L. Lee. **Gala Vice Chairs** are Alaina Beverly, Joyce Brayboy, Kim Sheftall Humphries, Robert Raben, Vanessa Reed,

Nicole Venable, Yelberton R. Watkins, and Katharine Weymouth. The evening is made possible by a generous grant from Southern Company and the **Corporate Chair is Southern Company Chair, President & CEO, Thomas A. Fanning**. The 2017 Opening Night Gala Benefit is produced by Events by André Wells.

Proceeds support Ailey's Washington, D.C. programs, including the creation of new works, arts-in-education activities, and scholarships to talented young dance students in the Washington area to attend The Ailey School in New York. Tickets for the black tie benefit performance and party range from \$750 to \$1,000 for individual tickets and from \$7,500 to \$35,000 for a table of 10. For further information, call 202-518-6908, or e-mail bobette@eventsbyandrewells.com.

The Company's seven-performance engagement spotlighting 11 diverse works and four D.C. debuts is part of [**JFKC: A Centennial Celebration of John F. Kennedy**](#), the Kennedy Center's yearlong programming initiative marking the 100th anniversary of John F. Kennedy's birth and legacy, inspired by [five ideals frequently attributed to America's 35th President: Courage, Freedom, Justice, Service, and Gratitude](#).

Pioneering founder Alvin Ailey's enduring legacy lives on through the expansive vision of Artistic Director Robert Battle, and the company's repertory and international reputation recognized by U.S. Congress as a vital American "Cultural Ambassador to the World" champions the ideal of freedom, embodying the spirit of President Kennedy's vision for America. In 1962, AAADT was selected by President Kennedy to tour Asia and Australia as part of the Special International Program for Cultural Presentations. The company has a rich history with the Kennedy Center, dating back to the building's grand opening in 1971 with the world premiere of Leonard Bernstein's *Mass* choreographed by Alvin Ailey and featuring the Company's members.

Alvin Ailey is a recipient of the Kennedy Center Honors and the National Medal of Freedom – the nation's highest civilian honor, and the Ailey organization was awarded the prestigious National Medal of Arts and many other honors. For more information on Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's 19-city coast-to-coast U.S. Tour and Ailey's performances, training and education programs, visit www.alvinailey.org



(L to R); AAADT in Alvin Ailey's *Revelations*, photo by Christopher Duggan; AAADT, photo by Andrew Eccles; Robert Battle and Gala Co-Chair Debra Lee at Ailey's 2016 D.C. Gala. Photo by Allison Shelley. **(CTRL+ CLICK ON PHOTOS FOR HI-RES DOWNLOAD)** – Please credit photos.

Click [here](#) for the full press release on Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's 2017 performances at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

For additional photos and press materials please visit pressroom.alvinailey.org

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Southern Company is the proud sponsor of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Washington, DC Gala Benefit.

The 2017 North American Tour is supported, in part, by the National Endowment for the Arts.

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ABOUT ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, recognized by U.S. Congressional resolution as a vital American “Cultural Ambassador to the World,” grew from a now-fabled March 1958 performance in New York that changed forever the perception of American dance. Founded by Alvin Ailey, recent posthumous recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom – the nation’s highest civilian honor, and guided by Judith Jamison beginning in 1989, the Company is now led by Robert Battle, whom Judith Jamison chose to succeed her on July 1, 2011. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has performed for an estimated 25 million people in 71 countries on 6 continents – as well as millions more through television broadcasts, film screenings, and online platforms - promoting the uniqueness of the African-American cultural experience and the preservation and enrichment of the American modern dance tradition. In addition to being the Principal Dance Company of New York City Center, where its performances have become a year-end tradition, the Ailey company performs annually at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC, the Auditorium Theatre in Chicago, the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County in Miami, The Fox Theatre in Atlanta, Zellerbach Hall in Berkeley, CA and at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark where it is the Principal Resident Affiliate), and appears frequently in other major theaters throughout the United States and the world during extensive yearly tours. The Ailey organization also includes Ailey II (1974), a second performing company of emerging young dancers and innovative choreographers; The Ailey School (1969), one of the most extensive dance training programs in the world; Ailey Arts in Education & Community Programs, which brings dance into the classrooms, communities and lives of people of all ages; and The Ailey Extension (2005), a program offering dance and fitness classes to the general public, which began with the opening of Ailey’s permanent home—the largest building dedicated to dance in New York City, the dance capital of the world —named The Joan Weill Center for Dance, at 55th Street at 9th Avenue in New York City. For more information, visit www.alvinailey.org.