

# DANCESPIRIT

## Meet the Dancer Who Auditioned 7 Times Before Making It into Ailey

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Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Chalvar Monteiro has known he wanted to be an Ailey dancer since he was a young student. And the New Jersey native fought hard for that childhood dream: He auditioned for the company seven times before being offered a contract, making him living proof that persistence pays off. As he prepares to perform with AAADT in his home state this weekend, I asked Monteiro to reflect on how he never let rejection slow him down.

**CS: How did you know that Ailey was the company for you?**

CM: I've known ever since I saw them at New Jersey Performing Arts Center when I was 12. And my first summer intensive at The Ailey School reinforced that dream.

**CS: What did you work on between all those auditions to increase your chances of success?**

CM: Between auditions, I'd go to ballet class as often as I could. I started to work on cross training, whether that meant working out at the gym or running around with children at my second job with the YMCA. To remain versatile, I took workshops from any and all companies and choreographers, since the Ailey repertory includes so many styles of movement.

**CS: Is there anything you know now that you wish you'd known before you started auditioning?**

CM: I wish I'd understood that timing is not up to you. I was so adamant about getting a job with a big company at a young age, but I didn't consider the factors that go into a company atmosphere, and that I wasn't ready to handle that at 20. I was able to develop my own way of thinking and learning before coming into a company where we learn fast and dance faster.

**CS: What's your advice for a dancer in a similar position?**

CM: Tell yourself that giving up is not an option. Try different ways of achieving the same goal. That may mean leaving your comfort zone. Find the value in every experience, and it'll shape you into a more adaptable person. Figure out how to make yourself an asset to any establishment. Sometimes we wait for the opportunity to push ourselves, but if you're always ready, you don't have to get ready.

**CS: What's the most important thing you've learned since getting this job?**

CM: The biggest thing I've learned since being here is to trust myself. This company has a reputation for strong and exciting performers, and I wanted to make sure I was "keeping up." But getting the job meant that I didn't have to prove anything. All I have to do now is be honest, and share my experience with anyone willing to pay attention.