

# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

## *Cry*

(1971 / New Production – 2015)

*For all black women everywhere – especially our mothers.*

*Choreography:* Alvin Ailey

*Music:* Alice Coltrane, Laura Nyro and Chuck Griffin

*Costumes:* A. Christina Giannini

*Lighting:* Chenault Spence

*Restaged by* Masazumi Chaya

In 1971, **Alvin Ailey** choreographed the ballet, *Cry*, as a birthday present for his mother; it went on to become an enduring work of American art. This 16-minute solo, which was first danced by the legendary Judith Jamison, is dedicated to “all black women everywhere – especially our mothers.”

The solo is made up of three parts – the first set to Alice Coltrane’s “Something about John Coltrane,” the second to Laura Nyro’s “Been on a Train” and the last has the Voices of East Harlem singing “Right On, Be Free.” The female soloist represents all black women, depicting their African origins, the trials and tribulations they have endured and their joyful triumph over those hardships.



AAADT’s Linda Celeste Sims in Alvin Ailey’s *Cry*.

Photo by Nan Melville.

When *Cry* premiered at New York City Center in 1971, it was an immediate sensation. It propelled Judith Jamison, who is now the Artistic Director Emerita of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and was Ailey’s muse for *Cry*, to international stardom in the dance world. In its review of the premiere, *The New York Times* proclaimed, “...for years it has been obvious that Judith Jamison is no ordinary dancer. Now Alvin Ailey has given his African queen a solo that wonderfully demonstrates what she is and where she is... Rarely have a choreographer and a dancer been in such accord.” Since Jamison’s portrayal of this archetypal figure first popularized the piece, it has become a distinct honor for Ailey dancers to follow in her footsteps by performing *Cry* in its entirety onstage.

“...most of all, the piece is probably **the closest dance has ever come to a shout - or cry - of pure anger, pain and exultation.**”

*The New York Times*

“...emotional and spiritual **transcendence...**”

*The New York Observer*

“In three sections, *Cry* explores physical hardship, emotional suffering and — to the Voices of East Harlem’s “Right On Be Free” — **boundless joy. Structurally, it builds to an emphatic release...**”

*The New York Times*

“the first-night audience... **applauded and cheered it for nearly 10 minutes.**”

*The New York Times*

*This production was made possible with generous support from Judith McDonough Kaminski & Joseph Kaminski.*

*The original production of *Cry* was made possible, in part, by a grant from Ford Foundation.*

## ***Cry***

Music Credit Information – listed in order as you hear them in ballet

### **Song: Something About John Coltrane**

Written by: Alice Coltrane

Published by: Jowcol Music

### **Song: Been on a Train**

Written by: Laura Nyro (BMI)

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### **Song: Right On, Be Free**

Performed by: The Voices of East Harlem

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