

**60**  
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ASCENDING



# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

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The Joan Weill Center for Dance 405 West 55th St, New York NY 10019-4402 (212) 405-9000 AlvinAiley.org

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Public Relations Contacts:

Lauren Morrow: [lmorrow@alvinailey.org](mailto:lmorrow@alvinailey.org) | 212-405-9079

Christopher Zunner: [czunner@alvinailey.org](mailto:czunner@alvinailey.org) | 212-405-9028

## **HBO PARTNERS WITH AILEY TO CELEBRATE ITS 60<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

**Jussie Smollett, Vanessa Williams, Jillian Hervey, and Black Thought Pay Tribute to the Company's Uplifting Artistry and Founder's Groundbreaking Legacy**

**Launching in Conjunction with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary New York City Center Season, the Tribute Series Invites Audiences to Share Their Ailey Stories**

**December 4, 2018 (NEW YORK CITY)** – HBO salutes Ailey at 60 with a social media video series to launch during **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** New York City Center season November 28 – December 30. This tribute video series will introduce new audiences to the Ailey legacy through moving commentary from music, film, and TV stars – **Jussie Smollett, Vanessa Williams, Jillian Hervey, and Black Thought** – who share how Ailey has inspired their artistry, impacted American culture, and continues to reach people of all ages backgrounds around the globe.

The series kicked off on **Monday, December 3** with actor, singer, and activist [Jussie Smollett paying homage](#) to the man who inspired him from childhood to today. Known for his role on FOX's *Empire* and a burgeoning solo music career, Smollett says in the series, "Ailey has been one of the biggest influences of my artistic life." He goes on to praise the Company for creating "a celebratory vibe of our culture," and breaking ground during a fraught time in American history. "When I see the Ailey company...I see freedom."

The second video features actress, singer, and author **Vanessa Williams** and her daughter singer, dancer, and activist **Jillian Hervey** (of Lion Babe) retelling their family tradition of passing on Ailey to the next generation – which began when Vanessa's mother first brought her to a Company performance as a young girl – and about how Ailey influenced their lives and artistic paths. The final video in the series features **Black Thought** (The Roots) discussing the work and personal influence of hip-hop choreographer, Rennie Harris (whose fourth Ailey ballet, *Lazarus*, premieres at City Center), and how the legacy created by Alvin Ailey reinforces the possibilities for young people.

"We are excited to help support this cultural treasure and extend its reach in new ways," said Lucinda Martinez, SVP of Multicultural and International Marketing at HBO and Ailey Board Member. "These respected entertainers will help to spread the Ailey legacy and bring dance 'back to the people,' as Mr. Ailey always emphasized."

"I am thrilled to introduce new audiences to Alvin Ailey – the man and the Company – through this HBO-produced artist-inspired tribute series," said Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Artistic Director Robert Battle. "We hope these videos encourage even more people to join us in celebrating the human spirit through the African-American cultural experience and modern dance tradition during this milestone season"



Left to right: Jussie Smollett, Vanessa Williams, Jillian Hervey, Black Thought.

Viewers can learn how the lasting vision of Alvin Ailey – a trailblazer who founded the Company at the cusp of the Civil Rights Movement – went on to permeate culture and inspire people from all walks of life to achieve their dreams by following the series on Ailey’s [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). All are encouraged to join in the conversation and share their Ailey inspiration using #AlvinAiley #Ailey60 #AileyAscending.

Audiences are invited to experience the Ailey magic in person during the New York season (November 28 – December 30), which includes new works by renowned choreographers Rennie Harris, Ronald K. Brown, and Wayne McGregor, as well as the return of Robert Battle’s first work for the Company, *Juba*, rarely seen gems by Alvin Ailey in the “Timeless Ailey” program, and Alvin Ailey’s acclaimed masterpiece *Revelations* – seen around the world more than any other work of modern dance. The season kicked off with an Opening Night Gala on November 28 featuring Honorary Chairs Angela Bassett and Cicely Tyson. Click [here](#) for the complete season press release. Tickets for season performances start at \$29, and are now on sale at the New York City Center Box Office, through CityTix® at (212) 581-1212, or online at [www.alvinailey.org](http://www.alvinailey.org) or [www.nycitycenter.org](http://www.nycitycenter.org).

Ailey is also proud to celebrate 60 years of artistry and excellence with the distinguished ***Ailey Ascending Honorary Committee***: **Gbenga Akinnagbe, Byron Allen, Christiane Amanpour, Jon Batiste, Harry Belafonte, Colman Domingo, André Holland, LaTanya Richardson & Samuel L. Jackson, Jane Krakowski, Tarell Alvin McCraney, Audra McDonald, Naturi Naughton, Yvonne Orji, David Oyelowo, Shonda Rhimes, Robin Roberts, Anika Noni Rose, Jussie Smollett, Lorraine Toussaint, Fredricka Whitfield, Vanessa Williams, and Jeffrey Wright.**

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**Delta Air Lines is the Official Airline of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater’s 60th Anniversary Season in New York.**

**American Express is the Official Card of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.**

**Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater gratefully acknowledges the support of Diageo North America during the 60th Anniversary Season.**

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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](http://www.alvinailey.org).

## **ABOUT HBO**

HBO® is one of the most respected and innovative entertainment brands in the world, serving iconic, award-winning programming to 142 million subscribers globally. A subsidiary of WarnerMedia, HBO is the world's most successful pay TV service with an extensive array of programming that includes some of the most notable titles to be on television including Game of Thrones®, Big Little Lies®, Westworld®, The Sopranos®, Sex and the City®, Band of Brothers®, and The Wire®. In the United States, HBO® and sister network Cinemax® are available across multiple platforms including HBO On Demand®, Cinemax On Demand®, HBO GO® and MAX GO®, as well as HBO NOW®. Internationally, HBO branded services, including television networks and the standalone streaming product HBO GO®, are available in more than 70 countries across Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean. HBO and Cinemax programming is also sold into more than 150 countries worldwide.

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