

60
YEARS
AILEY
ASCENDING



ALVIN AILEY
AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

AILEY II | THE AILEY SCHOOL | AILEY ARTS IN EDUCATION & COMMUNITY PROGRAMS | AILEY EXTENSION
The Joan Weill Center for Dance 405 West 55th St, New York NY 10019-4402 (212) 405-9000 AlvinAiley.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ailey Contacts:

Christopher Zunner: czunner@alvinailey.org / 212-405-9028

Lauren Morrow: lmorrow@alvinailey.org / 212-405-9079

Polksin Arts & Communications Counselors Contact:

Megan V. Sprenger, sprengerm@finnpartners.com / 212-593-5889

**AILEY ASCENDING 60th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION HONORS GROUNDBREAKING FOUNDER
WHILE TAKING BOLD NEW LEAPS TO ELEVATE ORGANIZATION'S REACH AND IMPACT**

**Landmark New York City Center Season to Feature Ailey's First Two-Act Ballet, *Lazarus*,
Created by Inaugural Artist-in-Residence Rennie Harris,
and Multimedia Work Bringing Alvin Ailey's Presence Back to the Stage**

**Six-Day *Choreography Unlocked* Festival Will Elevate Ailey's Home as a Hub for Creating,
Presenting and Discussing New Dance**

**International and National Tours Will Bring the Artistry of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater
and Ailey II to Audiences Around the World**

**Legendary Artists Share Insight into Heart and Soul of Company Beginning with
Guggenheim *Works & Process* Event, Followed by Legacy Panels Series**

Tickets starting at \$29 go on sale September 4!

August 1, 2018 (NEW YORK CITY) —When **Alvin Ailey** and a small group of African American modern dancers first took the stage in 1958, appearing at New York City's 92nd Street Y, the engagement was for one night only—but it turned out to be the start of a new era in the performing arts. Mr. Ailey became one of the groundbreaking greats in African American history, while the work of his Company grew beyond the limits of the stage to encompass education at all levels, community outreach and cultural diplomacy. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater now embodies six decades of achievement, celebrating the human spirit with performances that unite and inspire all.

This fall the organization that Mr. Ailey founded is honoring his pioneering legacy and carrying it forward with a **60th Anniversary celebration** titled ***Ailey Ascending***. The celebration begins in September 2018 with an **international tour**, continues over two weekends in October with a ***Choreography Unlocked*** festival of performance, conversation and master classes, expands to include exceptional **discussions and legacy panels** at partner institutions throughout New York City, and reaches a high point with a momentous **New York City Center Season** of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, November 28 through December 30. The City Center schedule features special programs of both widely popular and rare repertoire by all three of the company's artistic leaders—Mr. Ailey, Artistic Director Emerita **Judith Jamison**, and Artistic Director **Robert Battle**—and premieres of works by exciting guest choreographers, including the company's first two-act ballet, ***Lazarus***, created by the organization's inaugural artist-in-residence **Rennie Harris**.

In the spirit of Mr. Ailey's belief that "Dance came from the people and should always be delivered back to the people," the season will also include **national tours** by both the first company and **Ailey II**, a series of **Ailey Experience** workshops for teens and adults in cities across the U.S., and **Destination Dance Ailey Atlanta** designed to engage with collaborating organizations in its partner city.

Robert Battle said, “Alvin Ailey raised up the cultural heritage of African Americans for all to see. By doing so he also lifted the hearts and minds of people of every background and elevated the world of the performing arts, forever changing the artistic landscape. We carry forward Alvin Ailey’s storied legacy, and during our 60th Anniversary we honor it by continuing to heighten the artistry of our performances, the impact of our educational programs and the development of the next generation of performing artists. What Mr. Ailey gave us is more than a repertory and a tradition. It is a movement, a direction, a desire, a conviction that if the spirit is to live it must rise. We dedicate our 60th Anniversary to the next ascent.”

Bennett Rink, Executive Director of Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, said, “When you think about how this great Company started, what it represents today, and where it’s going, the overwhelming impulses are to feel grateful, and to throw the doors open even wider. As we begin our Anniversary, I want to express my deepest thanks to our artists and educators, our Board and staff, our donors and presenting partners across the U.S. and the world, and above all to the audiences and students we serve every day. I also join with everyone in the Ailey organization in saying we want this Anniversary to make us more welcoming and inclusive in everything we do. If we can do that, then this really will be a year of *Ailey Ascending*.”

Combining History and Innovation at New York City Center

Ailey’s 60th Anniversary holiday season at New York City Center, November 28 – December 30, will elevate a legacy of innovation and excellence in artistry with premieres by some of today’s most revered and prolific choreographers along with timeless treasures by Alvin Ailey. From **Rennie Harris** comes the Company’s first two-act work, ***Lazarus***, inspired by the life and legacy of Mr. Ailey and addressing the racial inequities our nation has faced, in 1958 when the company was founded and today. **Ronald K. Brown** brings his rousing mix of modern and African dance to his latest world premiere, ***The Call***. British powerhouse **Wayne McGregor** will thrill audiences once again with the Company premiere of his acclaimed contemporary ballet ***Kairos***. Rising choreographer **Jessica Lang’s** luminous work ***EN*** will return to the stage after its recent Lincoln Center premiere. The season also includes the long-awaited new production of Robert Battle’s electrifying ***Juba***, his first work for the Company created in 2003.

Special programs throughout December include “**Timeless Ailey**,” comprising excerpts of several rarely seen gems; “**All Ailey**,” featuring a selection of Mr. Ailey’s classics in their entirety; “**Three Visionaries**,” featuring works by Alvin Ailey, Judith Jamison, and Robert Battle; “**All New**,” comprising season premieres; and “**All Battle**,” with works by the Company’s Artistic Director. The season also includes Saturday Family Matinee performances followed by a Q&A with the dancers, with other special highlights to be announced. A special program on December 11 will commemorate City Center’s opening performance in 1943, as part of the theater’s 75th Anniversary celebration. The Principal Dance Company of New York City Center, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has been bringing audiences there to their feet since 1971, when it became this historic theater’s first resident modern dance company.

The New York City Center season launches on **Wednesday, November 28** with a **60th Anniversary Opening Night Gala** benefit performance, followed by a party at the New York Hilton Grand Ballroom. The one-night-only performance features special excerpts and premieres, including a piece d’occasion by Robert Battle, and an uplifting ***Revelations*** finale with live musicians and singers. The evening honors Prudential for its generous support and longstanding commitment to Ailey, especially its educational and community programs. The special program will feature the premiere of a **multimedia piece** celebrating the continual gift of Alvin Ailey’s presence in our hearts, minds, and stages. Created in collaboration with the award-winning artists Bob Bonniol and Caryl Glabb of MODE Studios, Inc., it will bring the voice and presence of Alvin Ailey back to the stage at the start of each performance during the New York City Center season.

-more-

First Artist-in-Residence Reaches All Aspects of Ailey

The organization will welcome Rennie Harris for an unprecedented **year-long Artist-in-Residence program**. During his time at Ailey, Mr. Harris will lead an exceptionally wide range of activities, in which he will serve as an artistic advisor to the New Directions Choreography Lab, conduct master classes and deliver lectures about choreography and the history of hip-hop to Ailey II and students and instructors at The Ailey School and Ailey Arts-in-Education, and teach workshops open to the public through the **Ailey Extension**.

Unlocking the Creative Process and Nurturing Choreographic Creativity

Central to *Ailey Ascending* are initiatives to elevate the organization's home, the Joan Weill Center for Dance, as a hub for creating, presenting and discussing new choreography.

Building on the success of the **New Directions Choreography Lab**, created by Robert Battle in 2011, the organization this year will present its first **Choreography Unlocked** festival, October 12-14 and October 26-28, in its own Ailey Citigroup Theater, with performances of works by New Directions alumni **Camille A. Brown, Juel D. Lane, and Netta Yerushalmy**; master choreographer workshops, some open to the public, led by Robert Battle, **Stefanie Batten Bland**, and **Jawole Willa Jo Zollar**; a discussion on how institutions can nurture new voices, moderated by Robert Battle with panelists including **Rennie Harris, Thelma Golden** and **Darren Walker**; and more. The New Directions Choreography Lab itself will continue for an eighth year, assisting choreographers in developing their craft by granting resident fellowships to four emerging and mid-career artists. This year's fellows and mentors are **Kyle Marshall** and Rennie Harris; **Davalois Fearon** and **Gus Solomons, Jr.**; **Yusha Sorzano** and **Charmaine Warren**; and **Bryn Cohn** and **Joanna Koetze**.

Ailey Legends Share Insights Into the Heart and Soul of the Company

Highlighting another key theme of *Ailey Ascending*, the organization will bring discussions of the many dimensions of its work to venues throughout New York, beginning with a special presentation in the **Guggenheim Works & Process** series, November 5 at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Robert Battle, Judith Jamison, and Rennie Harris will join in conversation about the qualities that make the Company so moving, vibrant and relevant, while Ailey dancers perform highlights from both classics and newly commissioned works. **Susan Fales-Hill** will moderate.

The discussion of Ailey's legacy and impact will continue at the **92nd Street Y**, where the first Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performance took place in 1958, for an Ailey II **Fridays at Noon** event on **February 1**. A conversation with Ailey II Artistic Director Emerita **Sylvia Waters** and current Artistic Director **Troy Powell** will be paired with a performance by the rising stars of Ailey II for a special Black History Month launch event.

Throughout the 60th Anniversary season, an **Ailey Legacy Panel** series will offer rare opportunities to hear about the rich history of Mr. Ailey and his company from legendary former dancers who knew him best. Audiences will learn about the significance of Mr. Ailey's signature style, how he changed the perception of American dance and how he taught that truly great dance can be a window to the heart and soul. Many of the Ailey Legacy Panels will take place at Ailey's home, The Joan Weill Center for Dance, while some will be presented in concert with esteemed partners, such as **The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture**. The series begins on December 10 with a panel entitled **Growing up with Alvin Ailey**, featuring **Sarita Allen, Desmond Richardson, and Elizabeth Roxas-Dobrish**, and will be moderated by Sylvia Waters. Further details and schedule to be announced.

-more-

Bringing Ailey Artistry to the Nation and the World

Recognized as an American “Cultural Ambassador to the World”—a role that is more vital today than ever—Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater will begin the Anniversary season by embarking on an **international tour**. The itinerary will take the Company to **Athens** (September 11-15), **Geneva** (September 19-23), and **Zurich** (September 25-30).

For its annual North American tour following the New York City Center season, the Company will bring the magic of Ailey to more than 20 cities, including **Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Miami, Berkeley, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New Orleans** and **Newark**, from February 1 through May 12, 2019.

Ailey II—known as “The Next Generation of Dance,” and as the bridge from The Ailey School to the professional world—will conduct its own tour of almost 40 cities around the nation and the world, beginning September 15 in **Towson, MD** and concluding on May 18, 2019 in **Lyon, France**. As it heads into its 45th year, Ailey II will welcome into its repertory four works by choreographers from the Ailey family. World premieres will be created by **Uri Sands**, a former Ailey dancer, and **Bradley Shelver**, an alumnus of Ailey II who was handpicked by Judith Jamison to receive a scholarship to The Ailey School during the Company’s historic visit to South Africa. **Troy Powell**, who was discovered by Mr. Ailey at age 9 at an Ailey Arts-in-Education outreach program and given a scholarship to The Ailey School, and who later danced for both companies, will choreograph his first new work for Ailey II since becoming its Artistic Director in 2012. In addition, *Flock* by Robert Battle will join the Ailey II repertory.

Dance as a Focus for Collaborations and Civic Partnerships

To deepen its engagement with an entire community outside of New York, the Ailey organization launched **Destination Dance Ailey Atlanta** in 2016. Now entering its third year, the initiative cultivates partnerships between Ailey and cultural, civic and educational institutions with dance as the centerpiece for engagement. The partner activities include performances, classes and workshops for the public, education programs in schools, conversations with artists and civic leaders, and more. Highlights of the 2018-19 Destination Dance season include performances by Ailey II at Rialto Center for the Arts in October and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater at The Fox Theatre in February, a *Revelations* residency in area schools in October, Atlanta Ballet’s AileyCamp in the summer, as well as panels, master classes, and public workshops.

Partner organizations for Destination Dance Ailey Atlanta include AREA (Atlanta’s Resource for Entertainment & Arts), Atlanta Ballet and Atlanta Ballet Centre for Dance Education, Atlanta’s Office of Cultural Affairs’ Cultural Experience Project and ELEVATE Public Art Festival, Atlanta public and private schools, the Center for Civil and Human Rights, Dance Canvas, The Fox Theatre, Hammonds House, High Museum of Art, National Black Arts Festival, Reigning Victory Dance Studio and Rialto Center for the Arts at Georgia State University.

AileyCamp Inspires Young People Nationally for Three Decades

AileyCamp, the innovative full-scholarship summer day camp, is also celebrating a milestone – 30 years of enlightening and educating underserved students ages 11-14. Launched by Alvin Ailey shortly before his passing in 1989, the program uses classes in dance, personal development and creative communications, along with daily affirmations, to help advance and guide more than 1,000 inner-city students in 10 cities: **Kansas City, MO; Kansas City, KS; Atlanta, GA; Baltimore, MD; Berkeley, CA; Chicago, IL; Miami, FL; Seattle, WA; Bronx, NY** and **Newark, NJ**. The theme for AileyCamp nationally is “joy,” and in honor of the Company’s 60th Anniversary, the final performances in all cities will pay homage to the artistry of Ailey by showcasing works from each decade of the Company’s repertory, including excerpts from *Blues Suite* (“Mean Ol’ Frisco”), *Revelations* (“I Been ‘Buked”), *Night Creature*, *Divining*, *Hymn* and *The Hunt*.

-more-

20th Anniversary of the Ailey/Fordham BFA Program and Textbook Featuring Ailey Athletic Boys

Developing the next generation of performing artists since 1969, The Ailey School is expected to train approximately 3,500 students from ages 3 to 25 in the coming year. More than 70% of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater members are alumni of the school, with more than a third attending the Ailey/Fordham BFA Program. This year marks the 20th Anniversary of this innovative partnership between The Ailey School and Fordham University, offering a diverse curriculum that combines the finest in dance and liberal arts education in a 4-year program. This fall, when school begins, primary-age students throughout the country will take a peek at the world-class training our youngest dancers receive. A beautiful 16-page, full-color book with photos by Rosalie O'Connor entitled ***The Ailey Athletic Boys*** will be part of the guided reading portion of a brand-new literacy program to be published by Heinemann Publishers, a division of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Offering “Real Classes for Real People” Nationally Through Ailey Experience

In conjunction with the first and second company tours, the **Ailey Extension** program will step out of New York and into cities across the country to offer two-day **Ailey Experience** dance workshops to teens and adults of all backgrounds and levels. Designed to expand Alvin Ailey’s life-long commitment to bringing dance to everyone, the workshops will be led by former Ailey dancers and world-class instructors and include technique classes, as well as in-depth study of classic Ailey works such as *Revelations*, *Blues Suite* and *Night Creature*.

As a precursor to the Anniversary, Ailey is delighted that **SummerStage** is presenting a free series of **Revelations workshops** in parks throughout New York City. The series concludes in the Lower East Side’s **East River Park** (August 10, 7 pm) and in Harlem’s **Marcus Garvey Park** (August 16, 7 pm).

Ailey Extends Accessibility of Dance in the Digital Realm through Video Series

Ailey is continuing to release **videos** created by the French video artist **Redha Medjellekh** featuring Company dancers in settings around the world. The series features a [tribute](#) released March 30, 2018—the exact anniversary of the historic 92nd Street Y performance—recorded in Mr. Ailey’s home town of Rogers, Texas, in the Mount Olive Baptist Church: the birthplace of *Revelations*.

“With the video from Rogers, Texas, we show where it all began for Ailey,” Bennett Rink concluded. “With our holiday season at New York City Center, our tours and our amazing range of education programs, we reflect where Ailey is today. And with our *Choreography Unlocked* festival and New Directions Choreography Lab, we not only show where Ailey is going tomorrow, but move ourselves toward that goal. Our 60th Anniversary celebrates the past, present and future all at once. We invite everyone to be a part of it.”

Tickets starting at \$29 are on sale Tuesday, September 4 at the New York City Center Box Office, through CityTix® at (212) 581-1212, or online at www.alvinailey.org or www.nycitycenter.org. Discount tickets are available for Ailey Super Fans who purchase tickets for more than one performance, for students with an appropriate ID, and for groups of 10 or more (discounts do not apply to \$29 tickets). For group sales, call 212-405-9082 or e-mail groupsales@alvinailey.org. For further information about Ailey’s New York City Center season and *Ailey Ascending* 60th Anniversary Celebration, please visit www.alvinailey.org/citycenter and www.alvinailey.org/ailey60.

For 60th Anniversary season images, click [here](#).

For historic Ailey images, click [here](#).

Lead support for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's 60th Anniversary is provided by Emily and Len Blavatnik.

Major support for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's 60th Anniversary is provided by Ford Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, and Pamela D. Zilly & John H. Schaefer.

Bank of America is the International Tour Sponsor of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

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 and a major supporter of the creation of *Lazarus*.

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

The Company premiere of *Kairos* is supported by commissioning funds from New York City Center.

***Lazarus* was made possible by the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Dance Project, with lead funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.**

Commissioning support for *Lazarus* provided by the Auditorium Theatre (Chicago).

***Lazarus* is supported by commissioning funds from Cal Performances at the University of California, Berkeley.**

Additional commissioning support for *Lazarus* provided by The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Generous support for the creation of *EN* is provided by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

Georgia Power and The Home Depot Foundation are Platinum Circle Sponsors of Destination Dance Ailey Atlanta.

Georgia-Pacific is a Gold Circle Sponsor of Destination Dance Ailey Atlanta.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution and Lockheed Martin are Silver Circle Sponsors of Destination Dance Ailey Atlanta.

The 2019 North American Tour is supported, in part, by the National Endowment for the Arts.

The 60th Anniversary Season is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

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.

###