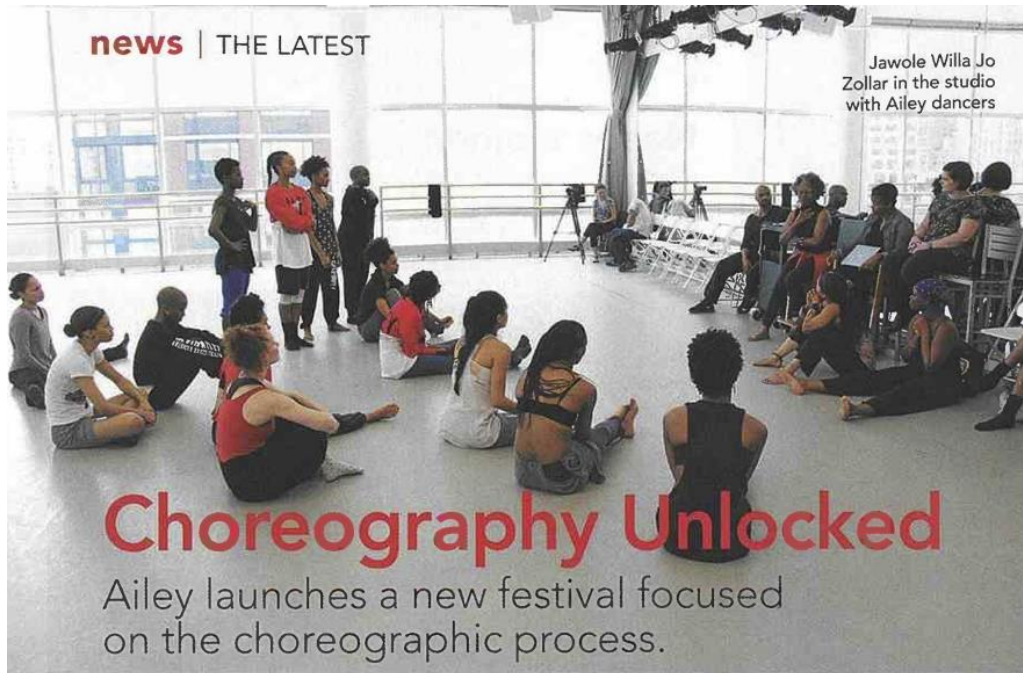


Choreography Unlocked

By: Jen Peters

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news | THE LATEST

Jawole Willa Jo Zollar in the studio with Ailey dancers

Choreography Unlocked

Ailey launches a new festival focused on the choreographic process.

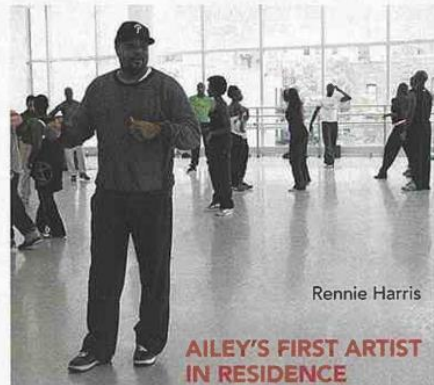
Coming this fall to the ever-expanding Ailey organization is an intriguing new event: the Choreography Unlocked festival. From Oct. 12–14 and 26–28, the Joan Weill Center for Dance will host workshops, performances and panel discussions. It is an extension of Ailey’s New Directions Choreography Lab, an annual residency fellowship for four emerging and mid-career choreographers, founded by artistic director Robert Battle in 2011.

The festival offers a rare experience for choreographers to work collectively on their craft, and for students and public audiences to interact firsthand with the process of creating dance. “Choreographers tend to section off on their own, so I wanted to offer classes for them to come together and vibe off each other,” says Battle. He also hopes to demystify the choreographic process for audiences.

The key component of the festival is process-oriented choreography classes geared toward critical thinking. Jawole Willa Jo Zollar will lead master classes for numerous New Directions alumni and other invited choreographers. Battle wanted to give an array of dancemakers the opportunity to work directly with Zollar because “she is an artist who understands how to pull things out to find the essence of a work.” Stefanie Batten Bland will do the same for select Professional Division students at The Ailey School, and further workshops will be open to the public.

Two performances will showcase pieces by Camille A. Brown, Juel D. Lane and Netta Yerushalmy—all fellowship alumni of New Directions. A separate public discussion, moderated by Danspace Project executive director Judy Hussie-Taylor, will bring to light different ways institutions can foster new and developing choreographers. A cross-genre panel, looking at how institutions are nurturing new voices, will be moderated by Battle with panelists including Thelma Golden, Darren Walker and the newly named artist in residence for the Ailey organization, Rennie Harris. “Audiences today are hungry for more. They want to understand process,” Battle says. “Today everyone wants an open floor plan—cooking in the kitchen isn’t a mystery anymore!”

—Jen Peters



Rennie Harris

AILEY’S FIRST ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Rennie Harris has been named artist in residence for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater’s 2018–19 60th-anniversary season. As part of this first-ever distinction, the renowned hip-hop choreographer will create a new piece (his fourth work with AAADT). *Lazarus*, the first two-act ballet to be created for the company, is set to premiere Nov. 30, during Ailey’s New York City Center season. Harris will also serve as a creative mentor to Kyle Marshall, one of four choreographers in this season’s New Directions Choreography Lab, and will teach and create throughout all Ailey branches. —JP