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# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

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

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER'S 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OPENING NIGHT GALA BENEFIT PERFORMANCE AND PARTY – WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 28 AT 7PM

**Honorary Chairs are Iconic Screen Stars Angela Bassett and Cicely Tyson**

**Evening Features a Piece d'Occasion by Robert Battle, Alvin Ailey's *Revelations* Sung by Ledisi, Erica Campbell, Norm Lewis, and Brandie Sutton, and the Premiere of *Becoming Ailey* – a Multimedia Work that Returns Alvin Ailey's Presence to the Stage**

**Celebration Honors Prudential Financial and Launches Ailey's Five-Week New York City Center Season**

**October 25, 2018 (NEW YORK CITY)** – As a centerpiece to its yearlong *Ailey Ascending 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary* celebration and a kickoff to its five-week holiday season, [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater](http://www.alvinailey.org) will host a star-studded gala benefit on **Wednesday, November 28<sup>th</sup> at 7pm**, complete with a **performance** for the ages at **New York City Center** and **party** at the **New York Hilton Midtown Grand Ballroom**. The Honorary Chairs for the evening are screen icons **Angela Bassett** and **Cicely Tyson**. Bassett, a Golden Globe Award winner, stars in the hit television series *9-1-1*, and was most recently featured in the 2018 blockbusters *Black Panther* and *Mission: Impossible – Fallout*. Tyson – known for a myriad of roles across television and film, including *Roots*, *Fried Green Tomatoes*, and most recently *How to Get Away With Murder* – has received three Emmy Awards, a Tony Award, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and on November 18<sup>th</sup> will make history as the first black woman to receive an Honorary Academy Award.

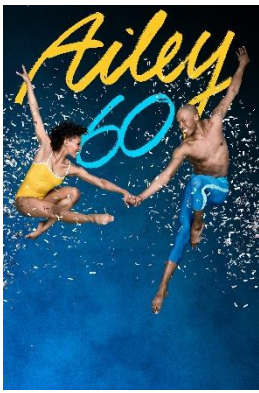
**This historic evening honors Prudential Financial** for its generous support and commitment to Ailey for over three decades, especially its educational and community programs.

“As one of our longest-standing corporate benefactors, Prudential Financial has played a vital role in Ailey’s success for more than half of the Company’s lifetime,” said Executive Director **Bennett Rink**. “Prudential has been indispensable in funding our outreach programs in Newark, AileyDance Kids and AileyCamp – a free summer program in Newark and 10 cities nationwide that helps guide inner city youth to their full potential. We thank them for their strategic planning and leadership support, as well as their commitment to advancing young people through education, and we applaud them for the tremendous work they’ve done to elevate the city of Newark.”

“Prudential Financial is honored to have worked alongside Alvin Ailey to help achieve his vision to bring dance to all people,” said **Lata Reddy**, senior vice president, Diversity, Inclusion and Impact at Prudential Financial. “His belief that the arts give voice to our shared humanity is one that we share. It’s with great joy that we at Prudential congratulate the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater on their 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.”

Christopher Taylor, an alumnus of the inaugural AileyCamp Newark (2011) and a current scholarship student at The Ailey School, will join Artistic Director Robert Battle in presenting Prudential Financial with the **Ailey Legacy Honor**.

The once-in-a-lifetime program features selections of classic Ailey works including a specially staged excerpt of [\*Memoria\*](#), a work he choreographed as an elegy for a dear friend; a piece d'occasion by Robert Battle, set to Nina Simone’s *Black is the Color*; and culminates with Alvin Ailey’s masterpiece, [\*Revelations\*](#), performed with live musicians and special guest singers **Ledisi** (12-time Grammy-nominated R&B artist), **Norm Lewis** (Tony-nominated baritone known for Broadway’s *Porgy and Bess* and NBC’s *Jesus Christ Superstar* live), and **Brandie Sutton** (critically-acclaimed Metropolitan Opera soprano). The program also features the premiere of ***Becoming Ailey***, 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 likeness of Alvin Ailey back to the stage at the start of each performance (except on December 11<sup>th</sup>) during the New York City Center season.



(L to R); Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater with live onstage music in Alvin Ailey's *Revelations*, photo by Christopher Duggan; photo by Paul Kolnik; Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Samantha Figgins and Jeroboam Bozeman; photo by Andrew Eccles. Cicely Tyson at the 2018 Ailey Spirit Gala, photo courtesy of Ailey. **(CTRL+ CLICK ON PHOTOS FOR HI-RES DOWNLOAD)** – Please credit photos.

“On this historic night we will mark 60 groundbreaking years and carry Alvin Ailey’s pioneering legacy onward and upward with a performance featuring renowned guest performers, cutting-edge innovation, and the artistry and inspiration that has made Ailey one of the world’s most beloved dance companies,” said Artistic Director **Robert Battle**. “It is also fitting that we take this occasion to honor Prudential Financial, a company that has helped Ailey reach so many milestones and was instrumental in creating the New Jersey Performing Arts Center where Ailey is the Principal Resident Affiliate and has performed annually for two decades. We welcome everyone to join the celebration and share in the joy during this milestone season.”

Prominent figures in the worlds of entertainment, business, philanthropy and politics will join [Robert Battle](#) and the Company for dinner and dancing to live music in the New York Hilton Midtown’s Grand Ballroom following the performance. The Gala benefits the creation of new works, scholarships to The Ailey School, and Ailey’s educational programs for young people. **Emily & Len Blavatnik, Paulette & Howard Bradnock, Melody Hobson & George Lucas, Debra L. Lee, Stephen Meringoff & Kim Charlton, Lata N. Reddy, Daria L. & Eric J. Wallach, and Joan & Sandy Weill** serve as **Co-Chairs for the Gala**. Call 212-405-9031 or visit [alvinailey.org/support/60th-anniversary-gala](http://alvinailey.org/support/60th-anniversary-gala) for tickets.

Ailey is also proud to announce the **Ailey Ascending Honorary Committee**, a distinguished group of individuals across industries who will join the organization in celebrating 60 years of artistry and excellence: **Gbenga Akinnagbe, Christiane Amanpour, Jon Batiste, Harry Belafonte, Colman Domingo, André Holland, LaTanya & 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, and Jeffrey Wright.**

Ailey’s 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary holiday season of premieres by renowned choreographers Rennie Harris, Ronald K. Brown, and Wayne McGregor, and returning favorites also features special programs, including “Timeless Ailey,” “All New,” “Three Visionaries,” “All Ailey,” and “All Battle,” plus a sparkling Season Finale on Sunday, December 30<sup>th</sup>. Click [here](#) for more information. 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).

**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.**

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

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

**Opening Night Gala Benefit Sponsors: Emily & Len Blavatnik, BNY Mellon, Debra L. Lee, The Meringoff Family Foundation, Prudential Financial, Daria L. & Eric J. Wallach, The Weill Family Foundation.**

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

**The 60<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.alvinailey.org).

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