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ASCENDING



**ALVIN AILEY**  
AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

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**ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER CELEBRATES SIX DECADES DURING  
20<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL WASHINGTON, D.C. OPENING NIGHT GALA BENEFIT AT  
THE JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS – TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5**

**Opera House Performances Features Rennie Harris' Two-Act Ballet *Lazarus*  
and Alvin Ailey's Masterpiece *Revelations***

**Dinner and Dancing Follows on the Terrace Level**



*Artistic Director Robert Battle at Ailey's 2018 Washington DC Gala. Photo by Tony Powell; Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in Alvin Ailey's Revelations. Photo by Gert Krautbauer; Gala Co-Chair Sela Collins, U.S. Senator Kamala Harris, and Executive Director Bennett Rink at Ailey's 2018 Washington DC Gala. Photo © Tony Powell*

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**(Washington, D.C.) January 15, 2019** – On Tuesday, February 5, 2019, **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's 20th Annual Washington, D.C. Opening Night Gala Benefit** kicks off the opening of the renowned Company's [engagement at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts](#). Following the 7pm opening program on the Opera House Stage – featuring Rennie Harris' powerful *Lazarus* and Alvin Ailey's masterpiece *Revelations* – **Artistic Director Robert Battle** will lead dinner and dancing on the Terrace Level of the Kennedy Center in celebration of Ailey's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

The evening's performance opens with acclaimed hip-hop innovator **Rennie Harris' *Lazarus***, Ailey's first ever two-act ballet. Described as "something like heaven" by *The New York Times*, Mr. Harris' electrifying fourth collaboration with the Company is inspired by the life and legacy of Mr. Ailey and addresses the racial inequities our nation has faced, both past and present. The performance culminates with **Alvin Ailey's *Revelations***, acclaimed as an uplifting must-see for all.

Proceeds from the annual benefit will support Ailey's Washington, D.C. programs, including the creation of new works, Arts in Education activities, and scholarships for talented young dance students in the Washington area to attend The Ailey School in New York City. Tickets for the black-tie benefit performance and party start at \$1,000 for individual tickets and range from \$10,000 to \$50,000 for tables of 10. Gala tickets are available for purchase [here](#). For more information, call 202-518-6908 ext. 2.

**The 2019 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Opening Night Gala Benefit Co-Chairs** include Lyndon K. Boozer, Sela Thompson Collins, DeDe Lea, Ruth and Arne Sorenson, and Yelberton R. Watkins. **Gala Vice Chairs** are Joyce Brayboy, Larry Duncan III, Kim Sheftall Humphries, Anthony A. Lewis, Tanya Leah Lombard, Vanessa Reed, Nicole Venable, and Katharine Weymouth. The evening is made possible by a generous grant from Gala Sponsor Southern Company and the **Corporate Chair is Southern Company President & CEO, Thomas A. Fanning**. The post-performance party is produced by Events by André Wells.

In 1958, Alvin Ailey and a small group of dancers took the stage in New York and forever changed American dance and culture. One of the country's groundbreaking greats, his Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater launched a new era in the performing arts, while the work of his Company grew beyond the limits of the stage to encompass education at all levels, community outreach and cultural diplomacy. Sixty years after its founding, Ailey continues to move forward under the leadership of [Robert Battle](#), reaching new levels of artistic excellence and inspiring all with the universal celebration of the human spirit using the African-American cultural experience and the modern dance tradition.

The pioneering founder's enduring legacy is carried forward during the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration entitled **Ailey Ascending**, featuring performances and community events that unite, enlighten, and educate people of all backgrounds. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has a longstanding history with the Kennedy Center, dating back to the building's grand opening in 1971 with the world premiere of Leonard Bernstein's *Mass* choreographed by Alvin Ailey and featuring the company's dancers. Today, the Ailey organization continues to champion the ideal of freedom, embodying the spirit of President Kennedy's vision for America.

Alvin Ailey is a recipient of a Kennedy Center Honor and the National Medal of Freedom – the nation's highest civilian honor – and the Ailey organization was awarded the prestigious National Medal of Arts, among many other honors. In 2008, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater was recognized by U.S. Congress as “a vital American cultural ambassador to the world.”

The Company marks its annual Washington, D.C. engagement from February 5-10, 2019 with seven performances spotlighting a plethora of dynamic works including: premieres of Rennie Harris' [Lazarus](#), Ronald K. Brown's [The Call](#), and Wayne McGregor's [Kairos](#), a new production of Robert Battle's [Juba](#), and the [Timeless Ailey](#) program, comprised of rarely seen excerpts by the Company's founder culminating with [Revelations](#). For more information on Ailey's performances at the Kennedy Center, click [here](#). For more information on the Company's North American tour and the organizations training and education programs, visit [www.alvinailey.org](http://www.alvinailey.org).

For additional photos and press materials, visit [pressroom.alvinailey.org](http://pressroom.alvinailey.org):

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**Southern Company is the proud sponsor of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Washington, D.C. Gala Benefit.**

**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.**

**American Express is 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.**

***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.**

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

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

### **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, 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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