

on the SCENE

BY KRISTEN SCHOTT

STEP IN TIME

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's 20th annual **DC Opening Night Gala Benefit** took center stage.

1. Artistic Director Robert Battle snapped a selfie.
2. Marian Wright Edelman and Sergey Gordeev
3. Co-chairs Sela Thompson Collins and DeDe Lea
4. Volanni Floral Design dreamed up the blooms.
5. Ailey dancer Michael Francis McBride was caught in the moment.
6. The talented Vernard J. Gilmore and Sarita Allen
7. DJ D-Nice set the musical scene.
8. The Washington Ballet's Julie Kent and Ailey dancer Courtney Celeste Spears



PHOTOS BY TONY POWELL

THE PARTY There were not one, but two anniversaries to toast when the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater sashayed into the District. Case in point: The 20th annual DC opening night gala also celebrated the company's diamond jubilee. And what a soiree it was. **THE PEOPLE** Some 800 movers and shakers joined the co-chairs (Lyndon K. Boozer, Sela Thompson Collins, DeDe Lea, Ruth and Arne Sorenson, and Yelberton R. Watkins) at The Kennedy Center. The Washington Ballet's Julie Kent, Ailey board chairman Daria L. Wallach and others were touched by a speech from Ailey School/Fordham student (and Takoma Park, Md., native) Nilah Pettus, who first saw the troupe perform at the center when she was 8 and is now following her dream thanks to the Ailey organization. They also savored dinner on the terrace post-performance. **BEST IN SHOW** The soiree staged the DC premiere of hip-hop star Rennie Harris' *Lazarus*, the company's first two-act ballet. But it was the upward of \$1.1 million total that had guests on their toes.