



ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

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Alvin Ailey, Founder JUDITH JAMISON, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR Masazumi Chaya, Associate Artistic Director

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ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER ANNOUNCES NEW WORKS PROGRAMMED BY ROBERT BATTLE FOR HIS FIRST SEASON AS ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, AND A MAJOR NEW CHOREOGRAPHY PROGRAM INSTITUTED UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP

Reaching Back into Ailey Tradition and Stretching Out in New Directions, 2011/12 Season Will Include World and Company Premieres by Paul Taylor, Rennie Harris, Ohad Naharin and Robert Battle and New Productions of Historic Repertory

NEW YORK, NY, May 12, 2011 — Revealing his vision for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater for the first time, incoming Artistic Director Robert Battle today announced highlights of the company's 2011/12 performance season, offering a program that extends the vital legacy of Alvin Ailey (1931-1989) in exciting new directions.

The diverse choreographic works selected by Mr. Battle that will be added to the repertory for the 2011/12 season are:

- the world premiere of a dance by hip-hop choreographer **Rennie Harris**, inspired by the stories of people living with or affected by HIV;
- the company premiere of **Paul Taylor's** classic *Arden Court* (1981), set on the company under the supervision of Mr. Taylor, which marks **the first time a work by this American master has been in the Ailey repertory;**
- the company premiere of *Minus 16* (1999), by the renowned American-Israeli choreographer **Ohad Naharin;**
- the company premiere of the solo *Takademe* (1999), a pivotal work in the career of **Robert Battle;**
- a new production of the solo *Journey* (1958) by **Joyce Trisler** (1934-1979), an early member of the Ailey company;
- and a new production of a landmark dance by **Alvin Ailey, Streams** (1970).

Approximately 20 works will be presented during the 2011/12 season, including repertory classics by Alvin Ailey, such as *Revelations*, and Robert Battle's *The Hunt*. The full season program will be announced at a later date.

Amplifying his plans for the company, Mr. Battle also announced the inauguration of a major new program of the Ailey organization, the **New Directions Choreography Lab**, designed to serve the entire field of dance. Assisting choreographers in developing their work, the program will grant resident fellowships to four emerging and mid-career artists each year, offering a stipend, the use of gifted dancers from The Ailey School, creative mentorships and rehearsal time at The Joan Weill Center for Dance. Unlike other programs that require the production and presentation of a final performance or commission, Ailey's new lab will enable choreographers to focus solely on the process of choreography as a creative experience, free from all restricting expectations or deadlines.

“This is the beginning of a new adventure—for the company, for me and for our audiences around the world,” stated Mr. Battle, who will succeed the legendary Judith Jamison as Artistic Director on July 1, 2011. “We are going to reach back and try to touch some of the vital sources of Alvin Ailey’s creativity, but also stretch forward into new possibilities that develop his legacy. For the millions of people who love Alvin Ailey’s work and have been inspired by the great achievements of Judith Jamison and our unsurpassed dancers, I hope this season will be just what the company has always promised: revelatory.”

Judith Jamison, who was named Artistic Director of the company in 1989 at the request of Alvin Ailey, will assume the role of Artistic Director Emerita on July 1, 2011. She has worked closely with Robert Battle since he was announced as Artistic Director Designate in April 2010. “Robert Battle’s choices for his debut season confirm what I have long known about him,” said Ms. Jamison. “He is a born leader, whose fierce intelligence and open-hearted spirit will carry this company to new heights. I am moved by the tribute he is paying in this first season to his elders in the world of dance, by the thrilling new journeys he is preparing for our dancers and audiences, and by the love and support he is offering to his fellow choreographers as they strive to create tomorrow’s masterpieces.”

Sharon Gersten Luckman, Executive Director of Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, stated, “During the past year, as Robert Battle has worked side-by-side with Ms. Jamison as Artistic Director Designate, the company has come to know his deep sensitivity and respect toward the dancers, his profound love for Alvin Ailey’s legacy and above all, his blazing creativity. He is a thinker and an innovator, an artist who demands new ideas from himself and is dedicated to helping others develop new ideas of their own. We are thrilled at the way these qualities shine through his first season with its broad range of artistic choices, including the brilliant new program he has instituted to support choreographers in their work and benefit everyone in dance.”

Joan H. Weill, Chairman of the Board of Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, commented, “During the many years I have been involved with this organization, I have been extremely proud of how the Ailey company continues to grow and evolve. Today we are celebrating the beginning of the next stage in the company’s life, and I am excited about Robert Battle’s leadership and vision and how it will shape our future.”

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater’s 2011/12 season begins November 30 at New York City Center, where the company will perform through January 1, 2012. Tickets starting at \$25 go on sale September 7. Currently on a 24-city North American tour celebrating 50 years of Alvin Ailey’s *Revelations*, an American classic acclaimed as a must-see for all and recently recognized by a U.S. Senate resolution, the company will next visit cities in Norway, Germany, Russia and Switzerland on a ten-week international tour from June 21 to August 28. The company will be in Moscow on July 1, when Robert Battle officially assumes the mantle of Artistic Director.

For further information, the public may visit www.alvinailey.org. For photos and additional press materials, members of the media may visit pressroom.alvinailey.org.

The 2011/12 Season Program: Highlights

For his first season as Artistic Director, Mr. Battle has chosen to add to the repertory a rich array of premieres and new productions that express his vision for the company while honoring some of his most significant artistic influences. The new season celebrates an American modern dance master, addresses an important social issue through hip hop and spotlights an influential female choreographer. The programming includes the revival of an iconic Alvin Ailey masterpiece, presents a signature work by the company's new leader and takes the company in new directions through improvisation and audience participation.

World Premiere

New Work choreographed by Rennie Harris (2011)

Hip-hop choreographer Rennie Harris, who worked alongside Judith Jamison and Robert Battle to create *Love Stories* for the company in 2004, is choreographing a new work inspired by the stories, poems and images submitted to the *Fight HIV Your Way* contest, an initiative of Bristol-Myers Squibb. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater will present the premiere of the work on World AIDS Day (December 1) at New York City Center. **Robert Battle comments:** "I think Rennie is great in the way he takes a conceptual approach to hip-hop. He is bringing a unique perspective to stories that absolutely have to be told, and that ought to be realized in a dance vocabulary that comes from a new generation."

Company Premieres

Arden Court (1981) choreographed by Paul Taylor

Modern dance master Paul Taylor will supervise the staging of this technically challenging work (rarely performed by companies other than his own) on the Ailey company, **the first of his works to enter the Ailey repertory.** Set to a sumptuous baroque score by William Boyce, *Arden Court* is a richly dynamic dance featuring striking duets, solos and a men's sextet showcasing the dancers' skills and musicality. Mr. Taylor is one of the artistic inspirations for Robert Battle, whose choreography often reflects the expansive use of space that is a hallmark of Mr. Taylor's work. **Robert Battle comments:** "We are celebrating a lineage by adding *Arden Court* to the repertory since Paul came out of Martha Graham's company, and Alvin was so influenced by Martha Graham. Alvin was also a fan of Paul's work, and the two of them started their companies at about the same time. It is important that we honor this American modern dance tradition—and *Arden Court* gives us the opportunity to explore the physicality of the dancers in a very different way."

Minus 16 (1999) choreographed by Ohad Naharin

This work by the exciting choreographer of *Black Milk* (from the 2003 Ailey season) features a score ranging from Dean Martin to cha-cha, from techno-pop to traditional Israeli music. Unfolding in sections, *Minus 16* uses Naharin's acclaimed "Gaga" method to break down old habits and make room for new movement and new experience, broadening the possibilities for dancers as interpreters and revealing the humanity and wit of the Ailey company. Mr. Naharin is dedicating the Ailey premiere of the work to the memory of his wife Mari Kajiwara (1951-2001), who was a dancer with the company for many years as well as Mr. Ailey's assistant. The duet from *Mabul* featured in *Minus 16* was originally created for her in 1992. *Minus 16* is based on excerpts from *Mabul* (1992), *Anaphaza* (1993), and *Zachacha* (1998). **Robert Battle comments:** "With *Minus 16* we are expanding the Ailey repertory with **a work unlike any other we have done.** It has an edge and offers surprising new experiences for the company and our audience. It will be both a great joy and a challenge for the dancers to improvise, break the fourth wall between audience and performer."

***Takademe* (1999) choreographed by Robert Battle**

For his first season as Artistic Director, Mr. Battle is bringing his fiery *Takademe* to the Ailey company. The complex, tightly woven rhythms of Indian Kathak dance are deconstructed and abstracted in this percussive, fast-paced work, where clear shapes and propulsive jumps mimic the vocalized rhythmic syllables of Sheila Chandra's jazzy score. **Robert Battle comments:** "*Takademe* is near and dear to me as one of my first creations. It's a work I made in the tiny living room of my old apartment in Queens. As I begin as Artistic Director, I want to acknowledge my journey, look back on what I did with so little and recognize having so very much now. Also, the work has a sense of humor, and some of my other works that have been done at Ailey were in a more serious vein. I wanted to share another aspect of myself with the Ailey audience."

New Productions

***Journey* (1958) choreographed by Joyce Trisler**

A meditative female solo, *Journey* is set to "The Unanswered Question" by Charles Ives, a brief, intensely evocative orchestral mood poem. An early friend and colleague of Alvin Ailey, Joyce Trisler performed with him in the Lester Horton Dance Theater in the early 1950s in Los Angeles and later danced and choreographed for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in New York. *Journey* was one of the early works that Alvin Ailey added to the company's repertory, in 1964, believing it would be a modern classic. **Robert Battle comments:** "From the first moment I saw this work many years ago I have been haunted by it, and could see the link to Horton, so it was a great education. It is sublime in its simplicity and power." The company last performed *Journey* in 1990.

***Streams* (1970) choreographed by Alvin Ailey**

In homage to the legacy and artistry of Alvin Ailey, Mr. Battle selected the landmark work *Streams*, the first full-length dance Mr. Ailey created without a plot. A major success when it premiered in 1970, *Streams* reflects the formal, meditative mood of Miloslav Kabelac's music using a pure Ailey idiom, in an abstract, highly structured yet fluid compilation of stunning solos, duets and group passages. The work features images inspired by bodies of water from gentle brook to turbulent ocean, which correlate to the changing emotional tides within us. **Robert Battle comments:** "There is a position in *Streams* where Alvin would say to the dancers, 'Think Paul Taylor at this moment.' This is a crucial link in our lineage, as members of the Ailey company and as American dance artists."

New Directions Choreography Lab

A hallmark of Robert Battle's vision for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is the ***New Directions Choreography Lab***, which he is introducing at this transformational moment in the organization's history. As a choreographer himself, Mr. Battle is keenly aware of the factors that can hold back choreographers in their work: lack of time, space, financial resources and access to versatile, trained dancers. Above all, he knows how rare it is for a choreographer to be able to explore the creative process freely, without deadline pressures or the requirement of producing a final performance, and to have the opportunity to discuss and edit a work-in-progress with a trusted artistic advisor.

The New Directions Choreography Lab, which has received leadership support from the Ford Foundation, will benefit the field of dance by creating an unparalleled home for the choreographic process, offering vital assistance each year to four emerging or mid-level choreographers working in a wide variety of dance techniques. The Lab will give these artists the opportunity to focus on the creative process by providing:

- Versatile Ailey-trained dancers
- Rehearsal space and time
- Monetary stipends
- Creative mentorship
- An opportunity for editing
- Freedom to create without the constraints of a commission or final performance

The choreographers and creative advisors selected for seven-week residencies at The Joan Weill Center for Dance during the inaugural year of the New Directions Choreography Lab are:

| <u>Choreographer</u> | <u>Creative Advisor</u> |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Adam Barruch..... | Elizabeth Keen |
| Camille Brown..... | Carmen de Lavallade |
| Joanna Kotze..... | Gus Solomons jr |
| Malcolm Low..... | Jawole Willa Jo Zollar |

Adam Barruch trained as an actor and studied dance at The Ailey School's Junior Division and La Guardia High School of the Performing Arts, as well as The Juilliard School. His work has been presented at the Ailey Citigroup Theater, Baryshnikov Arts Center, the Cunningham Studio and Dance Theater Workshop. His company, Adam Barruch Dance, will be presenting this summer at the Jacob's Pillow Inside/Out stage and at the Chicago Dancing Festival. www.adambarruch.com

Elizabeth Keen will be advising Adam Barruch. After beginning her concert dance career in the companies of Paul Taylor and Helen Tamiris-Daniel Nagrin, she was involved with the Judson Church movement, became a founding member of Dance Theater Workshop and from 1966 to 1981 choreographed for her own company, which toured nationally. Since then she has choreographed primarily for opera and theater, including the Metropolitan Opera, Los Angeles Opera, the Royal National Theater, American Shakespeare Theater and the Kennedy Center. She has taught at Sarah Lawrence College, Princeton University and The Juilliard School, where she co-developed the Composers and Choreographers Workshop and was among Adam Barruch's first teachers.

Camille Brown trained at La Guardia High School of the Performing Arts, The Ailey School and The North Carolina School of the Arts, among others. She is a former member of Ronald K. Brown/Evidence and was the first woman to be awarded The Princess Grace Award for Choreography. She has received commissions from Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and many other organizations and has showcased her work at Sadler's Wells (London), The Apollo, The Joyce Theater, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Central Park's SummerStage, Dance Theater Workshop, Symphony Space, Dancenow Festival and New York Fall for Dance Festival (City Center). She has served as Adjunct Professor of Dance at Long Island University and Barnard College and has created works for other major colleges and universities. www.camillebrown.org

Carmen de Lavallade will be advising Camille Brown. She was a member of the celebrated Lester Horton Dance Theater and made her Broadway debut in 1954 in *House of Flowers*, where she partnered with Alvin Ailey. She appeared in numerous television, film and off-Broadway productions and was a prima ballerina at the Metropolitan Opera, where she returned later as a choreographer. She appeared in Agnes deMille's American Ballet Theater production of *The Four Marys* with Judith Jamison and was a performer and a choreographer at the Yale School of Drama and later became a professor and member of the Yale Repertory Theater. In the early 1960s she was a principal guest performer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and her work *Sweet Bitter Love* was choreographed for the Ailey company in 2000. She is a founding member of the dance company PARADIGM and received Bessie Awards in 2000 and 2010.

Joanna Kotze, originally from South Africa and now based in New York, began choreographing in 2004. She has shown work at Danspace Project's Food for Thought, Dance New Amsterdam, Movement Research at the Judson Church, the 92nd Street Y, WAXworks and as part of Soho20 Gallery's Savior Faire Fall 2010 Performance Series with artist Asuka Goto. She is on faculty at Movement Research and has studied Klein technique with Barbara Mahler. Her work will be presented at Dixon Place this spring, Jacob's Pillow Inside/Out this summer and Dance New Amsterdam this fall. She currently performs with Kimberly Bartosik/daela, Netta Yerushalmy and Daniel Charon and has danced extensively with the Metropolitan Opera. She also holds a BA in architecture from Miami University and is a freelance architectural model builder. www.joannakotze.com

Gus Solomons jr will be advising Joanna Kotze. He danced in the companies of Pearl Lang, Donald McKayle, Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham. He is a founding member of PARADIGM, a repertory dance company for veteran performers, and received a Bessie Award for Sustained Achievement in Choreography in 2000 and a second Bessie in 2010. He is also an arts professor at NYU/Tisch School of the Arts as well as a freelance dance writer.

Malcolm Low trained with Joseph Holmes Chicago, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Homer Bryant and the Ruther Page Foundation. He has performed with Ronald K. Brown/Evidence, Stephen Petronio, Complexions, Les Ballets Jazz de Montreal and Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, among many others. His work has been shown at the River to River Festival, Dance Theater Workshop's DanceNOW, Harlem Stage, White Wave's Wave Rising Series, Dixon Place and SummerStage and he works with Crystal Pite and her company KIDD PIVOT.

Jawole Willa Jo Zollar will be advising Malcolm Low. She founded Urban Bush Woman (UBW) in 1984 as a performance ensemble dedicated to exploring the use of cultural expression as a catalyst for social change. In addition to the 33 works created for UBW, her choreography is part of the repertory of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Philadanco, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company and Ballet Arizona. She was a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellow and was invited to participate in a White House convening on using creative and collaborative approaches to community-building and civic engagement. Zollar is a Bessie Award recipient and was selected by the Kennedy Center as a Master of African American Choreography. She is also on the faculty of Florida State University, where she received her M.F.A. in dance.

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The Prudential Foundation and **Wells Fargo** are the co-sponsors of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's New York season.

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Bristol-Myers Squibb is proud to support a new Ailey work which was inspired by the "Fight HIV Your Way" initiative.

Leadership support for the New Directions Choreography Lab is provided by the **Ford Foundation**.

The 2011/12 season is sponsored, in part, by public funds from the **New York State Council on the Arts**, a state agency, and the **New York City Department of Cultural Affairs**.

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About Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

www.alvinailey.org

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (AAADT), 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. Today, led by Judith Jamison, AAADT has performed for an estimated 23 million people in 48 states and in 71 countries on 6 continents, including two historic residencies in South Africa, promoting the uniqueness of the African-American cultural experience and the preservation and enrichment of the American modern dance tradition. Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, Inc. is the umbrella organization that includes Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater; 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.

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