

Alvin Ailey receives Presidential Medal of Freedom

By: Sheila Anne Feeney

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Alvin Ailey, the revelatory dancer and choreographer who began life in Rogers, Texas, and died in Manhattan in 1989 at the age of 58, has been posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, by President Barack Obama.

Robert Battle, the artistic director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, will accept the medal on Ailey's behalf

in a White House ceremony Nov. 24.

Eighteen recipients of the Medal were announced Monday night. Other honorees are Broadway composer and lyricist Stephen Sondheim, actresses Meryl Streep and Marlo Thomas, musician Stevie Wonder, civil rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner (all murdered in 1964), physicist Mildred Dresselhaus, author Isabel Allende, economist Robert Solow, golfer and activist Charles Sifford, journalist Tom Brokaw, activist Suzan Harjo, and public servants Edward Roybal (posthumous), John Dingell, Abner Mikva, Patsy Takemoto Mink.

"I look forward to presenting these 18 bold, inspiring Americans with our nation's highest civilian honor," Obama said in a statement, adding, "These citizens have made extraordinary contributions to our country and the world."

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