

Staten Island students get a dance lesson at Gracie Mansion

By Diane C. Lore | February 19, 2015

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- Some 40 students from Stapleton's Dreyfus Intermediate School spent a Thursday afternoon they won't soon forget.

New York City's First Lady Chirlane McCray welcomed the sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders to Gracie Mansion to participate in an Alvin Ailey Dance Workshop exploring Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's signature masterpiece, "Revelations," to celebrate Black History Month.

Students learned how the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater grew from a now-fabled performance in March 1958 at the 92nd Street Y in New York City. Led by Ailey and a group of young African-American modern dancers, that performance changed forever the perception of American dance.

They learned how the dance company celebrates the uniqueness of the African-American cultural experience, and the preservation and enrichment of the American modern dance heritage. When Ailey began creating dances, he drew upon his "blood memories" of Texas, the blues, spirituals and gospel as inspiration, which resulted in the creation of "Revelations" -- his most popular and critically acclaimed work.

The city's first lady greeted students and explained how she's always been a fan of the dance company.

According to her staff, she hopes to invite more students from city public schools to Gracie Mansion to experience cultural events.



New York City's First Lady Chirlane McCray hosted 40 students from Dreyfus Intermediate School, Stapleton, at Gracie Mansion for an Alvin Ailey Dance workshop celebrating Black History Month. (Photo courtesy Office of the Mayor)