

## Alvin Ailey® American Dance Theater's Danica Paulos

April 8, 2015

By Marc Alexander

Alvin Ailey® American Dance Theater carries on Alvin Ailey's pioneering legacy of uplifting, uniting and celebrating the human spirit as Ailey's extraordinary dancers bring life to a wide variety of premieres, new productions and classic works. The company returns to Los Angeles **April 15-19** with a six performance engagement at **The Music Center** led by **Artistic Director Robert Battle** with three powerful and memorable programs at the **Dorothy Chandler Pavilion**.

The *Associated Press* proclaimed that "... the timing could hardly be more apt for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's new civil rights-themed piece" *ODETTA*, a West Coast premiere choreographed by renowned Ailey dancer and Los Angeles native Matthew Rushing. The tribute is set to the musical repertoire of celebrated singer and civil rights activist Odetta Holmes, who was known as "the voice of the Civil Rights Movement" and anointed as "the queen of American folk music" by Martin Luther King, Jr.



Alvin Ailey Dance Theater company member Danica Paulos. Photo by Andrew Eccles

We recently sat down with **Danica Paulos** from the company to learn more about life as an Alvin Ailey dancer.

Southern California native Danica Paulos realized early that she wanted to pursue a career in dance and through sacrifice and family support she focused, trained, and made it happen. "I made a lot of sacrifices like missing out on a social life and other experiences that a child would have but those are the choices I made. I'm from Huntington Beach and I trained in Santa Monica, which is a good forty minutes to an hour, a way depending on traffic. My grandmother would drive me, wait for me all day, and drive me back home late at night. When it boils down to it, it was worth it," she said. Danica made the big decision to move East at a pivotal time in her life. "By my senior year of high school the timing was right and I auditioned for the

Ailey School and got in. I moved to New York at seventeen years-old because the ultimate goal was to dance for a company like Ailey in New York," she said.

Danica loves almost every aspect of living in the Big Apple. She enjoys the culture, energy, and diversity and feels it's where she needs to be to be a professional dancer. There is one huge aspect of Gotham she is not a fan of however. "I love everything about New York, the vibe of the city, the culture, and the people I have met. The only thing I do not like is the cold. I cannot stand it. I miss the beach and the sun everyday," she said with a laugh.

Danica is an amazing dancer whose fluidity and grace is as much athletic prowess as practiced motion. Her over a decade's training has paid off in her fulfilling her dream of traveling the world doing what she loves as a professional. She appreciates that she gets to see other cultures and customs outside of the US. "Touring is hard because it's tough to live out of a suitcase but at the end of the day I'm traveling the world doing what I love to do so I can't even complain. My first tour was to Norway, France, Germany, Denmark, and Luxemburg. This summer we are spending a month in Paris and in South Africa," she said.

Beyond her love of dance, Danica is an avid photographer and has recently also started painting. "I do photo shoots in New York with my dance friends when it's warm outside. We find cool areas like in Central Park to

shoot. I have also started painting and on tour when I'm the bus I'll be painting or drawing. I'm really into art," she said.

Danica hopes to continue her dance career for at least ten years, hopefully with Alvin Ailey Dance Theater, which she loves. "Ailey is a company of dancers who are the most soul stirring and can move you during any performance. It's a combination of technical procession and passion, which grabbed me by the heart when I saw them. I thought that they were everything I could want in a company. They are doing difficult and challenging movement but also telling a story. It's not just steps. It's really about sharing with an audience and that's what is most interesting to me and that's what I wanted to do," she said.

Danica likes giving back through dance and looks forward to one day having a studio of her own near one of her favorite places. "Ailey is a lot about giving back through dance and exposing children to art so I love that. I also hope to open a studio one day in California, hopefully by the beach," she said.

**Alvin Ailey® American Dance Theater** first appeared at The Music Center in 1998 and is one of the most popular dance companies to regularly perform in this series, having previously been presented 5 times.

Tickets for **Alvin Ailey® American Dance Theater** are priced from \$34-\$138 and are available at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion Box Office, 135 North Grand Avenue. Tickets are also available by calling (213) 972-0711 and online at [www.musiccenter.org/ailey](http://www.musiccenter.org/ailey) For groups of 10 or more, call (213) 972-8555 or email [MCgroupsales@musiccenter.org](mailto:MCgroupsales@musiccenter.org)



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in Matthew Rushing's ODETTA Photo by Steve Wilson