

June 10 – 16, 2015

The Week in  
New York

# Alvin Ailey dances for change



It should be no surprise to fans of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater that in a year marked by riots and protests, the company's latest program is rooted in themes of oppression and change.

This season, which begins Wednesday 10 at Lincoln Center, includes *Odetta*, a new ballet paying homage to singer and activist Odetta Holmes. *No Longer Silent* addresses similar themes—the contemporary ensemble piece, choreographed by the company's artistic director, Robert Battle, is set to music by a composer who died in a German concentration camp. The choreography comes to grips with marginalization and the notion of giving a voice to the silenced.

"In the context of now, in terms of social justice, I think it's definitely making a statement," Battle says of the lineup. "It's really about the human family as opposed to one race or one religion."

Tackling politics head-on through dance is nothing new for Ailey—the company was one of the first to admit dancers of all races. *Revelations*, its signature work, which debuted in 1960, tells the story of African-American struggle and perseverance in the South, beginning in times of slavery and moving toward freedom. The piece, an integral part of nearly all the company's programs, is included in this season's lineup, as is *Exodus*, a hip-hop piece from choreographer Rennie Harris firmly rooted in an

exploration of the issues we face in 2015.

"Rennie and I started to talk about what was happening in the streets and the civil unrest and the brutality, and I just thought this was the right time to have a work by him because of the way he uses hip-hop as a catalyst to tell a story," says Battle.

Harris's choreography in *Exodus* is set to an original mash-up of house music and poetry and centers around the concept of transitioning from ignorance toward a new order.

"I'm the first street-dance choreographer they've used to create a work, so it's bringing a different perspective," Harris says of the piece.

And for audiences who are

inspired to move their own bodies after seeing this season's shows, anyone who attends a performance can redeem their ticket stub for one of Ailey Extension's 80 dance or fitness classes, including Zumba, jazz and West African dance. Battle says it's a way for fans to continue the experience after they leave the theater.

"Alvin Ailey said dance comes from the people and should always be given back to the people," he says. "It's a wonderful way to invite the outside in." —Dana Varinsky

**Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is at the David H. Koch Theater (at Lincoln Center).  
Wed 10–June 21; \$25–\$150.**