

**Robert Battle, Alvin Ailey Dance for Silenced Voices**

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"Art is universal; art connects people." Those sentiments may seem trite -- maybe even cliché -- nearly to the point of losing all meaning.

But sometimes a notion or phrase becomes trite because it is true. The latter certainly applies if you are talking about a performance by Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Alvin Ailey artistic director Robert Battle can testify to that. Like

many around the world, Battle's first introduction to the legendary dance troupe was a VHS copy of "Revelations." Later in childhood, Battle had the opportunity to see the Alvin Ailey dancers on stage. It was nothing short of a personal revelation -- a conversion.



*Listen Here:*

<http://news.wabe.org/post/robert-battle-alvin-ailey-dance-silenced-voices>

In one of his first experiences as artistic director, Battle told Lois Reitzes that the company took "Revelations" to Russia. The audience didn't nod and politely clap; instead, the Russians were "acting as if they were in a baptist church somewhere in Harlem."

Mr. Battle, the dancers and audiences around the world have yet to tire of the company's signature piece. But that doesn't mean the Alvin Ailey dancers cease to explore newer material.

For their upcoming annual visit to Atlanta, Battle will revive a work he originally created in 2007 for his alma mater, The Juilliard School. The dramatic ensemble work is called "No Longer Silent," and it is set to the music of Erwin Schulhoff's ballet "Ogelala."

If the name Erwin Schulhoff does not ring any bells, that may be because the Nazis silenced the artwork and then the artist himself. Universal parallels emerge: Alvin Ailey was born into a silenced generation and formed his dance company during the Civil Rights Movement.

According to Battle, Ailey created the company "because he didn't see the images and stories being told about his people ... and also to give people of color a place on the concert dance stage."

Reitzes added, "this was his silence to break."

"No Longer Silent" and other pieces will be performed when Robert Battle and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre return to Atlanta's Fox Theatre February 10-14.

