



Alvin Ailey dancers get local students moving

By: Reena Karasin

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“If you wanna move, let’s move,” says Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater dancer Hope Boykin. She steps offstage at Lexington’s Cotting School auditorium and invites students to join her: “It’s hard to resist, isn’t it?”

Boykin and her colleagues, Jeroboam Bozeman and Belen Pereyra, visited three schools in the Boston area last week to teach movement and rhythm classes as part of a Celebrity Series of Boston-run residency program funded by the Amelia Peabody Foundation. They also taught a master class at Pereyra’s alma mater, Boston Arts Academy.

“We’re blessed to do this,” Boykin says. “I find, especially coming here after all these years, that there’s nothing that limits you except what you think your limits are.”

The Alvin Ailey dancers taught routines involving upper body movements and poses, and emphasized rhythm through snaps and claps. Performing the same routine to classical, percussive and Silento’s “Watch Me (Whip/Nae Nae),” the pros showed how music affects how choreography comes across.

“I think dance is a universal language,” Bozeman says after the session at the Cotting School. “It’s something that we can all understand, despite language disabilities.”

The Cotting School student MaKenna Garrett, 16, says that she enjoys the chance to move.

“Dancing really is important to me,” MaKenna says. “Moving your body in different ways [makes me feel] free.”

Boykin says outreach and teaching is an integral part of being an Alvin Ailey company member. “It’s a part of the company mission. Alvin Ailey [himself] did outreach before it was even called outreach.”

And Pereyra knows firsthand the influence that taking classes with professionals can have — Boykin taught a class at the Boston Arts Academy while Pereyra was still a student there, which she describes as “the best thing ever.”

While the Alvin Ailey dancers are only visiting schools for a couple of days, the dancing won’t end there.

“I’m a big fan of Justin Bieber,” Garrett says. “[I dance to his music] in my room, I do my own moves.”

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater will return to Boston with performances March 17-20 at the Citi Wang Theatre. Tickets begin at \$35.