



# AILEY<sup>®</sup>

## ARTS IN EDUCATION & COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

## PRESS KIT



# AILEY ARTS IN EDUCATION & COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

“AileyCamp helped me become a leader... It taught me that through hard work and dedication, anything is possible.” – AileyCamp Newark participant

[Ailey's Arts In Education & Community Programs](#) (AIE) offer people of all ages opportunities to enrich and transform their lives through dance-based education programs. Since 1992, AIE has given young people from diverse backgrounds the opportunity to explore their creative potential while also imparting life skills such as teamwork and self-discipline. Reaching 100,000 people each year, the organization's year-round education and community initiatives are designed to cultivate a life-long love of the arts, develop creativity, and promote healthy lifestyles.



Children's Aid/AileyCamp New York final performance, 2018.  
Photo by Robert DeMartin.

- [AileyCamp](#): Founded by Alvin Ailey in 1989, AileyCamp is a free summer day camp in nine U.S. cities that helps students ages 11–14 develop their self-confidence, navigate social challenges, and explore their creativity in an atmosphere of warmth, respect, and trust. AileyCamp provides youth an invaluable opportunity to master their bodies and strengthen their respect for themselves and others within a supportive framework, giving them an important foundation for the future.
- [AileyDance for Active Aging](#): This program furthers Alvin Ailey's belief that “dance is for everybody,” by reaching seniors in community centers and in residential homes for independent and assisted living. AileyDance for Active Aging offers dance classes that support strength and flexibility training that promotes both cardiovascular and cognitive stimulation. More than a fitness program, it serves as an outlet for artistic expression, fosters a sense of joy and builds a greater sense of community and social engagement among the participants.
- [AileyDance Kids](#) offers dance training in a comprehensive format that inspires self-respect and confidence, while also fostering an appreciation for the joy of dance. AileyDance Kids residencies engage more than 9,000 students in dance throughout the greater New York City area, including schools in Newark, New Jersey; and over 1500 youth in select tour cities where the companies perform.
- [Revelations: An Interdisciplinary Approach curriculum](#): Alvin Ailey's life and his signature work, *Revelations*, serve as the inspirational framework for a comprehensive study of dance, language arts, and social studies. Most recently, AIE's *Revelations* curriculum was adapted into a virtual series as part of Remote Learning Activities, to successfully educate middle school aged students in New York City and across the country.
- [Night Creature: An Imaginative Journey Through Dance](#): In 2017, AIE launched *Night Creature: An Imaginative Journey Through Dance*, modeled after the *Revelations* curriculum. This program for elementary age youth in grades 3 through 5 is based on the study of Alvin Ailey's *Night Creature*, a fusion of Ailey's buoyant choreography and Duke Ellington's sparkling music.
- **AileyDance Kids SOAR: Success. Opportunity. Artistry. Respect**: This initiative reaches over 75 schools and special education programs, providing opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in dance classes, lecture-demonstrations, and performances. These residencies are led by teaching artists and musicians with training in teaching special needs populations, to meet the individual needs of every student.
- [Remote Learning Activities](#): As the demand for online learning expands, AIE remains committed to providing quality dance education through virtual or hybrid learning models in multiple formats – live remote residencies, customized pre-recorded packages, and more – to best suit schools and organizations looking for alternatives to in person classes, physical education offerings, or to provide an engaging extracurricular activity for students.



# AILEYCAMP

## DAILY AFFIRMATION

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I will not use the word “can’t” to define my possibilities.



Alvin Ailey believed “dance is for everybody” and was especially dedicated to using dance to enhance the lives of underserved children. AileyCamp represents a vital continuation of Alvin Ailey’s vision, using the power of dance to enrich and positively alter the lives of at-risk youth. Young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are in need of programs that stimulate, present positive themes, and provide role models and mentors.

AileyCamp is an innovative summer program designed to engage underserved children ages 11-14. Through disciplined dance training, creative writing instruction, personal development, and communication workshops, campers develop a respect for themselves and others that meaningfully impacts their lives.

Started by Alvin Ailey himself along with the Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey in 1989, AileyCamps now operate in nine cities across the country, including:

Baltimore, MD

Miami, FL

Berkeley/Oakland, CA

Newark, NJ

Chicago, IL

New York, NY

Kansas City, KS

Seattle, WA

Kansas City, MO



Photo Credits: Robert DeMartin; Nicole Tintle; Robert DeMartin

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AileyCamp has helped me express myself and make better decisions.

- AileyCamper

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Each day of AileyCamp, students take dance classes rotating among ballet, modern, jazz, tap, and West-African dance; a Personal Development course examining issues of self-esteem, decision-making, peer-pressure, and self-awareness; and a Creative Communication course which emphasizes the power of writing and visual arts to communicate thoughts and feelings.

Since 2012, AileyCamp has built in programs that provide the young men enrolled in AileyCamp with opportunities to focus on their particular needs at this critical stage in their personal development. Boys' Percussion Workshop and Boys' Day provide male campers with a private space to focus on their development as young men, while simultaneously allowing female campers the same freedom to converse with their teachers and peers in an all-female environment. Boys' Percussion Workshop presents the history of African culture through music, teaching the campers how to play the Djembe drum and other West African instruments.

AileyCamp summer activities conclude with an end-of-camp performance of dance, drumming, and poetry by the campers for family, friends, and community leaders. The performance not only showcases the creative and technical skills of the campers, but also serves as an exciting display of the self-confidence, performance skills, and pride developed during camp.



Photos by Nan Melville and Robert DeMartin

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Since attending AileyCamp, my daughter has gained patience, the ability to work with others, being accountable for herself and her actions, and coping skills.

- Parent of an AileyCamper

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Since its inception, this vital program has reached thousands of underserved youth across the country, providing direction and hope to children who are most in need of knowing that there can be a bright future.

## Drawings from campers



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AileyCamp has helped me socially and mentally and helps me find different ways to handle peer pressure. It helps me be able to deal with the issues of life itself.

- AileyCamper

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# AILEY

## ARTS IN EDUCATION & COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Alvin Ailey believed that “dance is for everybody.” Since its founding in 1958, the Ailey organization has honored this commitment to bring dance into the classrooms, communities, and lives of people throughout the world. AileyDance for Active Aging furthers Ailey’s original vision by reaching older adults in community centers and in residential homes for independent and assisted living.

### AileyDance for Active Aging

Ailey believes the transformative power of dance is applicable for all ages. Far too often, adults become prone to injury due to inactivity or isolation, and have limited opportunities to engage their imaginations and express their creativity. AileyDance for Active Aging offers dance classes that support strength and flexibility training through a thoughtful and sequential progression of movement that promotes both cardiovascular and cognitive stimulation.

More than a fitness program, AileyDance for Active Aging serves as an outlet for artistic expression by creating choreography which cultivates the imagination and fosters a sense of joy. These shared artistic experiences build a greater sense of community and social engagement among the participants.



Residents at Carnegie East House  
Photo by Nicole Tittle

*What I enjoyed most about AileyDance for Active Aging was the joy, laughter, friendship, euphoria, happiness, excitement!*

-Participant from James Lenox House

#### RESIDENCY GOALS INCLUDE:

- Support the development of a stronger sense of community among participants through social engagement
- Learn basic dance skills and technique; develop memory by learning movement phrases taught by the instructor
- Deepen individual's ability to create and gain confidence in expressing oneself artistically, engaging the emotion of their memories and life stories
- Show improvement in flexibility, muscle integrity, gait, balance, strength and endurance
- Connect to personal memories and exhibit a sense of joy



Union Settlement Participants in Jefferson Park  
Photo by Richard Henry, DFTA

*"I loved this class. It gave me something to look forward to. I loved expressing and working out life's complications through dance. The exercise was great and low impact."*

-Participant from New Settlement Community Center

#### • WHAT WE OFFER:

- Planning meeting with the Ailey Teaching Artist(s) and the administrative staff of the Older Adult Center or Residence
- Series of weekly dance classes (60 or 90 minutes)
- Outlet for artistic expression cultivating the imagination to express one's life stories
- Culminating sharing presentation with an invited audience
- Opportunities to see live performances
- History and background about Alvin Ailey and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

#### HOW WE DO IT:

- Create a clear structure for the dance classes that includes a warm up and cool down
- Make adaptations for participants with mobility or balance issues
- Use visual and auditory supports for participants as appropriate
- Create movement phrases that include the expression of feelings
- Introduce basic dance elements and choreographic structure
- Utilize prompts that engage and stimulate memory and life stories
- Create a playlist of participant-suggested musical selections
- Offer opportunities for caregiver and family engagement
- Maintain strong communication between Ailey Arts In Education and organizational staff to ensure success for all participants
- Conduct ongoing assessment to garner feedback from participants and administrative staff

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“I wish this class was offered daily citywide! It would give greater awareness of Alvin Ailey and the healing power of dance.”

*Participant from New Settlement Community Center*

“Ailey provided fabulous and encouraging teachers! I loved the freedom of being able to do anything my body allowed.”

*Participant from the James Lenox House*

“The teachers are wonderful. Thank you very much, for serving this community with the art of dance. This is a god send!”

*Participant from New Settlement Community Center*

“The class made me feel like I can accomplish anything with practice.”

*Participant from Union Settlement senior center*

“AileyDance for Active Aging is a wonderful way to express yourself to music.”

*Participant from Carnegie East House assisted living center*

“This is the only class for dance in the Bronx for adults. As an elderly person I need to move and keep myself happy... I hope this class will continue in the future: because we are old doesn't mean our lives are over. We need to move, act, and enjoy the art of dance. This is an opportunity I didn't have before and I love it.”

*Participant from New Settlement Community Center*

# Revelations: An Interdisciplinary Approach

## Overview

For over 20 years, Ailey's Arts In Education & Community Programs has brought *Revelations: An Interdisciplinary Approach* into classrooms nationally and internationally. This innovative, curriculum-based initiative uses dance as an inspirational framework to reinforce the academic material taught in the classrooms. The Ailey organization worked with experts in the field of arts in education to develop age and interest appropriate written lessons and movement activities for middle school students.

The program has been implemented nationwide in cities such as New York City, Newark, Atlanta, Los Angeles, Miami and Washington, D.C.; and internationally in London, England. Most recently, the residency was adapted into AIE's Remote Learning Activities as a condensed, virtual program entitled "Revelations Virtual Dance Workshop Series," as the role of online learning expands globally.



Nasha Thomas leads students in a *Revelations* Residency at Richmond Heights Middle School. Photo by Justin Namon, courtesy of Arsht Center.

## Revelations Curriculum

The *Revelations: An Interdisciplinary Approach* curriculum is designed to utilize Mr. Ailey's signature work, *Revelations*, as the inspiring theme for a comprehensive, sequential, in-depth study of language arts, social studies, and dance. Through this innovative program, participants actively engage in a process of thinking, reflecting, discussing, researching, writing, creating, performing, and assessing. This approach encourages learners to explore and embody the life story of Alvin Ailey and *Revelations* while connecting it to their own life experiences, community, state, and world issues as well as other bodies of literature and works of art.

The *Revelations: An Interdisciplinary Approach* curriculum was designed by youth education expert Kathleen Isaac with the standards set by the New York State Learning Standards for the Arts, the New York State Learning Standards in Social Studies and the New York City Board of Education New Performance Standards in English Language Arts. Participating schools must qualify as having Title-1 status, be located in underserved or economically struggling communities, and typically be lacking in arts instruction. Students from these schools are often from lower to middle income households and have never before seen dance on the concert stage. With arts funding for public schools diminishing year after year, it has become vitally important for programs like *Revelations: An Interdisciplinary Approach* to exist on a national level.

Each residency is led by the National Director of AileyCamp/Spokesperson & Master Teacher for Arts In Education, Nasha Thomas, formerly a leading Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater company member for 12 years, and her team of teaching artists. On the first day of the residency, the program instructors meet with the school teachers to actively walk them through the curriculum and demonstrate how to most effectively use the curriculum throughout the residency and then integrate it within their everyday school instruction. Participating teachers come from a range of backgrounds, including Art, English, Social Studies, Mathematics, and Special Education.



Nasha Thomas leads students in a *Revelations* Residency at Richmond Heights Middle School. Photo by Justin Namon, courtesy of Arsht Center.



## Revelations: An Interdisciplinary Approach (cont'd)

### Student Enrichment through **Revelations: An Interdisciplinary Approach**

During the *Revelations* residencies, students participate in a variety of exercises which help them to not only learn the history of dance, but also the accomplishments of Alvin Ailey and the creation of his masterpiece, *Revelations* – a ballet which has been seen by more people across the globe than any other work of dance. Each day of the program begins with a physical warm-up, which then progresses to lessons in language arts and movement/choreography.

The daily lessons conclude with a creative writing activity, allowing each student to actively analyze and reflect on his or her experiences that day. Through this residency, students learn discipline, self-esteem, creativity, and how to express their uniqueness. Each of the week-long residencies culminates with the students attending a special school performance of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. After seeing the dance elements and concepts that the students practiced in their classrooms then demonstrated for them on the concert stage by the professional first Company, students, and teachers alike leave the performances in awe and truly inspired.



*Revelations* Residency at Richmond Heights Middle School.  
Photo by Justin Namon, courtesy of Arsht Center.

*"This residency is about students cultivating life experiences through vocabulary development, poetry, narrative reports and critical reviews and then translating them into motion as a means of self-expression."*

**-Nasha Thomas**

National Director of AileyCamp/Spokesperson & Master Teacher for Arts In Education

### Comments about **Revelations** Curriculum

*"You gave our students a wonderful gift...You will never know the tremendous impact you had on these kids. With half of our student population at the poverty level, we treasure these opportunities for enrichment."*

**Dee Gardner**

Principal of Piedmont Open Middle School in Charlotte, NC

*"Our students had such a wonderful experience – they have been reminiscing this past week...You can be sure that the hip-hop warm-up and 'I Wanna Be Ready' will be practiced MANY times before the school year is over!"*

**Nancy Nussbaum**

Dance Instructor at Parkway Middle School of the Arts in Ft. Lauderdale, FL



## Revelations Residencies

### **NEW YORK:**

“Having an established professional dance company present in a performing arts school strengthens school and student behaviors, academic and social.”

Teacher, Ronald Edmonds Learning Center (MS 113)

“One of my favorite parts was when we were doing our warm-up and it was my turn to show the class a move. It was very exciting seeing them all do my move. I felt like an actual choreographer!”

Student, Ronald Edmonds Learning Center (MS 113)

“Alvin Ailey’s story inspired me to work harder in school and my schoolwork.”

Student, Ronald Edmonds Learning Center (MS 113)

### **ATLANTA:**

“This is an excellent way to teach. Everyone was successful! Superb planning...something they will remember the rest of their lives.”

Teacher, Brumby Elementary School

“I really love the Alvin Ailey dance instructors. They were really fun to hang out with and dance with. Also they were great performers...It was so fabulous to have them here and teach us these dances.”

Student, Brumby Elementary School

“I had a lot of fun with the dancers. Also, I have learned a lot of new dances that I can show my family and other friends. I hope the next school they visit has as much fun as we did.”

Student, Brumby Elementary School

### **BOSTON:**

“I really enjoyed the workshop! One can easily make connections to curriculum and classroom management by integrating dance.”

Teacher, Renaissance Charter Public School

“It was a great way to learn the advantages of moving in the classroom and teaching cooperation through movement...Thanks so much!”

Teacher, Renaissance Charter Public School

### **CHICAGO:**

“I learned that sometimes you have to believe in yourself in order for other people to believe in you.”

Student, Reavis Elementary School

“I learned that dance is...art and a physical way of telling a story. It was fun and if they’re coming back next year, I’m in!”

Student, Daniel Boone Elementary School

“Thank you for leaving New York and coming to teach us some of your dance steps because now I know them by heart and I’m teaching everyone else!”

Student, Reavis Elementary School

# Night Creature: An Imaginative Journey Through Dance

## Overview

In the spring of 2017 Ailey's Arts In Education & Community Programs launched its newest curriculum initiative: *Night Creature: An Imaginative Journey Through Dance*, modeled after the *Revelations* curriculum. This new program for elementary-age youth in 3rd through 5th grades is based on the study of Alvin Ailey's *Night Creature*, a fusion of Ailey's buoyant choreography and Duke Ellington's sparkling music. As a large ensemble work, replete with movements that invoke animals in joyful celebration, is ideally suited for engaging young minds.

For more than fifteen years, Ailey's Arts In Education & Community Programs has brought, *Revelations: An Interdisciplinary Approach* into classrooms in cities such as Atlanta, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York City, Newark, Washington, D.C., London, and Copenhagen.



Nasha Thomas teaching *Night Creature* Residency in Miami. Photo by Daisy Cabrera

*Night Creature: An Imaginative Journey Through Dance* is now available for elementary schools locally, nationally, and internationally. To develop age- and interest-appropriate movement activities for 3rd – 5th grade students, this curriculum-based initiative, created in conjunction with arts in education experts, uses dance to strengthen students' learning in other academic areas while offering educators suggestions in making connections to classroom studies.

## Night Creature Curriculum

As with *Revelations*, *Night Creature: An Imaginative Journey Through Dance* provides in-depth study of age-appropriate subject matter woven together through and with dance. Throughout the curriculum, students will explore the history of jazz music and jazz dance, the basic elements of movement analysis, strategies for group collaboration and peer assessment as well as experience embodied learning through dance-making opportunities. The *Night Creature* curriculum uses imaginative thinking to provide connections to music, visual arts, socials studies, science and literacy through discussion, analysis, reflective response, and writing. Students will be encouraged to explore their own "night creatures" through learning excerpts of *Night Creature*, writing poems, drawing, and creating their own original choreography.

The *Night Creature* curriculum was designed by dance educator Catherine Gallant and guided by The New York City Department of Education's Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Dance, the New York State Standards for the Arts, and the National Core Arts Standards.

Each residency is led by the National Director of AileyCamp/Spokesperson & Master Teacher for Arts In Education, Nasha Thomas, formerly a leading member of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and her team of teaching artists. On the first day of the residency, the program instructors meet with the school teachers to actively walk them through the curriculum and demonstrate how to most effectively use the curriculum throughout the residency and then integrate it within their everyday school instruction. Participating teachers come from a range of backgrounds, including Art, English, Social Studies, Mathematics, and Special Education.



# Night Creature:

## An Imaginative Journey Through Dance (cont'd)



Nasha Thomas at Notre Dame Residency.  
Photo by Kirk Richard Smith

### Student Enrichment through **Night Creature: An Imaginative Journey Through Dance**

During the *Night Creature* residencies, students participate in a variety of activities which help them to not only learn the history of jazz music and jazz dance, but also the accomplishments of Alvin Ailey and the creation of his masterwork, *Night Creature*, a ballet that lives on in the Ailey repertory and continues to delight audiences year after year. Each day of the program begins with a physical warm-up, which then progresses to lessons in poetry, rhythm and music, and movement/choreography. The daily lessons conclude with a creative writing activity, allowing each student to actively analyze and reflect on his or her experiences in student journals. Through this residency, students learn discipline, self-esteem, creativity and how to imaginatively express their uniqueness. Each of the week-long residencies culminates with the students attending a special school-time performance of *Night Creature* by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. After seeing the dance elements and concepts that the students practiced in their classrooms demonstrated for them on the concert stage by the Ailey company, students and teachers alike leave the performances in awe and truly inspired.

*Your imagination costs you nothing but can cost you everything if you don't use it.*

**Robert Battle**  
Artistic Director, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

### Comments about the **Night Creature** Curriculum

*What an amazing way for my dance students to explore their imaginations. This experience has opened up a wonderful way for my students to see their core subjects in a creative and imaginable way.*

**Rashamella Cumbo,**  
Dance Educator, Museum Magnet School at P.S. 191M

*This residency exposes young students to the wonderful world of jazz music and allows them to stretch their creative minds while exploring a variety of movement styles and rhythms. It's fun and playful and challenges them to develop new concepts and ideas about dance, art and life around them.*

**Nasha Thomas**  
National Director of AileyCamp/ Spokesperson & Master Teacher for Ailey Arts In Education

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## ARTS IN EDUCATION & COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Alvin Ailey believed that “dance is for everybody.” Since its founding in 1958, the Ailey organization has honored this commitment to bring dance into the classrooms, communities, and lives of people throughout the world. AileyDance Kids SOAR furthers Ailey’s original vision by conducting residencies across New York City in District 75 schools and other independent schools dedicated to students with special needs and learning challenges.

### AileyDance Kids (ADK) SOAR Success. Opportunity. Artistry. Respect.

This initiative provides opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in dance classes and other events. ADK SOAR residencies are structured in collaboration with school administrators and classroom teachers to meet the individual needs of students who have a variety of special needs. Experienced AIE dance teaching artists and musicians with training in teaching special populations conduct ADK SOAR residencies.

AileyDance Kids SOAR dance residencies connect to school curricula in English Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, Dance, Visual Arts, Literacy, and Music, using the New York City Department of Education Blueprint for Learning in Dance, NYS Standards for the Arts, and the National Core Arts Standards.



Students at P1604, Manhattan, enjoying a West African dance class taught by Ailey Teaching Artist Ethel Calhoun, April 2016  
Photo by Heather Bryce

“We danced together; we got to see each other scared and vulnerable. We were in it together and lifted each other up. The positive feeling of community, camaraderie and true friendship blossomed after the residency.”

- Betsy Mitchell, Teacher at P751M

#### RESIDENCY GOALS INCLUDE:

- Self-discovery through dance
- Gains in self-regulation and emotional expression
- Motor and language development
- Group collaboration
- Opportunities to see live performances
- History of Alvin Ailey and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater



High School Students from Manhattan School for Career Development at a "Come & Dance at Ailey" workshop  
Photo by Nicole Little

AileyDance Kids SOAR is a fun and enjoyable experience that also challenges students to explore their creative potential while fostering an appreciation for the joy of dance.

#### WHAT WE OFFER:

- A minimum of 8 instructional sessions for 2 classrooms of students, scheduled during in-school time; consecutive periods
- Choice of dance technique: Creative Movement, Modern, Jazz/ Hip Hop, West African Dance
- 2 teaching artists: 1 lead and 1 assistant (West African class is accompanied by a musician)
- 1 Planning meeting with school staff and assigned teaching artists to ensure that the needs of students and teachers are met
- 1 Percussion Lecture-Demonstration Assembly Program
- 1 culminating student sharing presentation following the final instructional session
- Tickets for students and their chaperones to see an Ailey performance

#### HOW WE DO IT:

- Create a clear structure for the dance classes and other related activities
- Make adaptations for students with mobility issues
- Use visual and auditory supports for students as appropriate
- Focus on self-regulation, confidence, team work, self-respect, and empathy
- Develop students' interpersonal and intrapersonal skills
- Develop skills such as personal space and appropriate physical proximities
- Offer opportunities for parent engagement
- Maintain strong communication between Ailey Arts In Education and school staff to ensure success for all students

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Cathryn Williams at (212) 405-9157  
or visit [AlvinAiley.org/AIE](http://AlvinAiley.org/AIE)





## NASHA THOMAS

MASTER TEACHER & SPOKESPERSON, AILEY ARTS IN EDUCATION & COMMUNITY PROGRAMS  
NATIONAL DIRECTOR, AILEYCAMP



[Nasha Thomas](#) oversees AileyCamp and designs the national outreach for Ailey's Arts In Education & Community Programs. As a primary liaison between the Ailey organization and the national arts-in-education community, she plays a central role in working with local communities to develop and run AileyCamp in cities across the U.S., as well as managing national residencies, leading workshops, and teaching master classes, helping Arts In Education reach over 100,000 people each year through education and community initiatives. A graduate of New York's High School of the Performing Arts and Southern Methodist University, she received the prestigious Presidential Scholar of the Arts award. At the invitation of Alvin Ailey and later under the direction of Judith Jamison, Ms. Thomas danced with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater from 1986 to 1998.

Highlighted as one of [Good Housekeeping's](#) "Humanitarians Who Are Our Heroes," Ms. Thomas combines her passion for inspiring the next generation and personal experiences as a performer and Master Teacher to lead Ailey Arts In Education programs in public school classrooms across the country to the Lincoln Center Plaza and from Gracie Mansion to the White House, and more. In 2020, Ms. Thomas reached students across the world virtually as she helped kicked off the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Alvin Ailey's iconic *Revelations* with a social-distanced workshop streamed from the [Rockefeller Center rooftop](#), with virtual programs for TED Discovery Series and [Facebook](#), and was the lead instructor for the [Revelations Virtual Dance Workshop Series](#), designed for middle school students blending dance with poetry, history, and music, which builds a foundation of artistic exploration that will enhance any students' academic experience.

# **PRESS HIGHLIGHTS**



# Berkeleyside

## AileyCamp back in motion after 2-year gap in Berkeley

By: Ximena Natera

August 22, 2022



The camp taught dozens of 11-14-year olds dance moves created by the legendary choreographer Alvin Ailey.



After a two-year hiatus due to COVID-19, the AileyCamp brought middle school students from Berkeley and Oakland back into the theater this summer to learn dance performances created by the late legendary choreographer Alvin Ailey.



The six-week national youth program created by Ailey in 1989 combines rigorous dance training in modern, jazz, ballet and African styles with personal development activities, including leadership and communication. It is meant “to enrich and positively impact the lives of children” across the country.



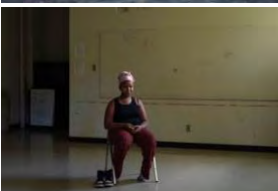
Locally, Cal Performances has produced the free summer dance camp on the UC Berkeley campus for 20 years and it culminates with a performance at the Zellerbach Hall.

“When Alvin Ailey first started his company, many theaters in the United States would not allow” his dance troupe to perform in their venues because his company was racially integrated, said Kulwa Aparra, a camp guidance counselor. “Zellerbach is one of the first theaters to welcome the Ailey company, so it’s a big deal for us to keep this history of making it a safe space.”

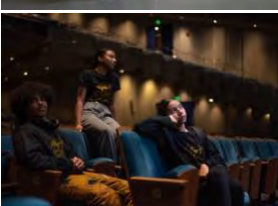


### Reversing COVID-19’s fatigue through movement

Patricia West, who has been involved with the camp since 2017, was named director last summer virtual classes. The students took dance lessons through Zoom and created a video for their final performance.



While last year’s challenge was virtual fatigue, returning to campus this summer presented other complications. COVID-19 rates in the Bay Area were soaring with the new Omicron variants when the camp began in June. Still, perhaps the biggest challenge was re-adapting the youth to in-person training after two years of isolation.



West immediately recognized the strain the pandemic had on students. Morale was low.

“We’ve seen a lot of students in this cohort where bullying is a big thing. So being here, it’s an opportunity for us to talk openly about being bullied or being a bully and how to interact with each other,” said West, who has danced professionally with several performance companies in the Bay Area and taught dance at a private school in Oakland.



Aparra, who was born and raised in Berkeley, agreed that isolation and the hyper-virtuality of the past years had shaped the youth in a unique way.

“A lot of times, they’re moving their bodies in ways that they haven’t moved before. It can bring up stuff, like suppressed emotions or trauma ... especially coming out of COVID.”

She said this year was “very intense because our campers almost went a full two years without movement, without having PE, so our first week was kind of like waking up their bodies again and relearning physical boundaries.”

To reinforce equality, campers wore uniforms. However, makeup was not allowed until the final performance, and cellphones were not permitted.





Last shot at making an impact

To be admitted to the program, students must apply in early spring, interview and complete an orientation session with their families. While they are not required to have dance experience, they must be committed to the program.

“There is a concerted effort to reach far into all the schools in the East Bay, to make sure we reach the most marginalized communities,” Aparra explains.



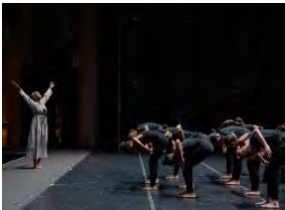
The process takes months as the staff reaches out to principals, counselors, and dance teachers across the Bay, asking them to identify possible candidates. Choosing young dancers is an essential step in the process and the last in impacting this age group.



David McCauley, who launched and directed the AileyCamp at UC Berkeley for 18 years until 2020 when the pandemic brought it to a halt, remembers the story of one student named Spencer Pulu, known affectionately as SPULU.

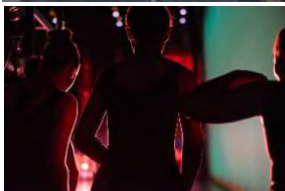
He had been kicked out of class at Roosevelt Middle School in Oakland when McCauley was on campus for a presentation about the camp. McCauley invited several students, including Spulu, to create an impromptu dance piece.

“A lot of them were just kind of, you know, joking around, not paying attention. And this one young man was there, and he was really focused, cheering and getting people going. I thought this guy has spunk. He knows what to do. He’s got vision,” McCauley said.



Pulu is now an AileyCamp associate director. On the morning of the performance in late July, he was one of the staff in charge of running it.

“I couldn’t sleep last night,” said Pulu, who comes from a large family that immigrated from Tonga. “The final performance brings so many memories of friends and loved ones.



“A lot of our dance and music learning was through church. In my culture, dance was an extracurricular activity. I didn’t grow up thinking that men were allowed to dance, specifically ballet, jazz, modern dance.”

That changed when McCauley invited him to the program.



“I think acting out and misbehaving was the way I kind of explore. ... There were not many outlets to explore arts. I got in trouble for fighting in school,” he said.

The school principal pushed him to join the camp, and Spulu, somewhat annoyed at the idea, accepted.



“I was really nervous. Everyone was associating dance and movement with queerness and being feminine,” Pulu said.

That summer, he found an outlet through dance. In high school, he returned to the camp as a junior leader and later as a staff member every summer through college. Last year, he joined West

to help run the camp and imagine its future.

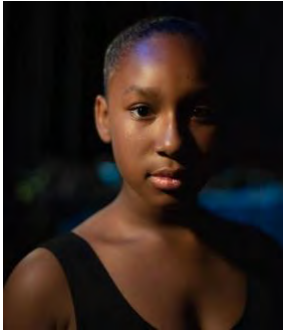
“A lot has changed,” Pulu said. “These kids are so inclusive. They’ve learned throughout the years as media has shifted the narrative around queer identity, and they have a lot of exposure to that.”

McCauley, 72, a Detroit native and Bay Area resident since 1990, was a member of the Alvin Ailey Dance Company, first as a student and later as rehearsal director.



"You don't catch everybody, but many you do," he said. "And for me, when I was directing, it was about giving a lot of those things that Mr. Ailey had given to me."

Besides fundraising, McCauley said the challenge has always been to keep the program relevant for the students.



"The campers come with their music, the language, and all of that changes. The camp must grow and evolve and always stay relevant. Patricia's challenge now is to expand and create a new network in the community the camp serves. When I say the community, I mean The Community! The people in Berkeley, Oakland, Richmond; it doesn't matter, race, religion, creed, none of that matters. If this is something that appeals to you, then you are welcome here, and that is a challenge."

Curtain call

It's showtime for the cohort of 48 young dancers to put all they learned in the past six weeks into one special night.



But before the curtains were raised, West led one last group exercise to alleviate their nerves. In a wide circle, they each named a feeling followed by a burst of movement from rage to warmth, happiness and shame. Laughs and giggles transformed into stillness and quiet energy. On the side of the stage, teachers watched, pacing. The show began.

Barefooted and wearing black leotards and tights, they performed "I've Been Boked," an excerpt from Revelations, Alvin Ailey's signature masterpiece, a homage and reflection of African American culture that was inspired by his childhood memories in rural Texas and the Baptist church.

West said bringing dance into the classroom is "just another way of learning" and showing young people how to express themselves.

"I think younger children understand that they're in their body; they express themselves from the inside out. ... In American culture, there's a myth that a dancer looks a certain way. We try to shape ourselves and get frustrated if our body can't do something. Children start to say, 'well, no, I'm not a dancer' because we've really misnamed what a dancer is. So yeah, I try to disrupt that notion."





## [A camp founded by Alvin Ailey teaches kids dance — and life skills](#)

By: Melissa Rose Cooper

July 25, 2022



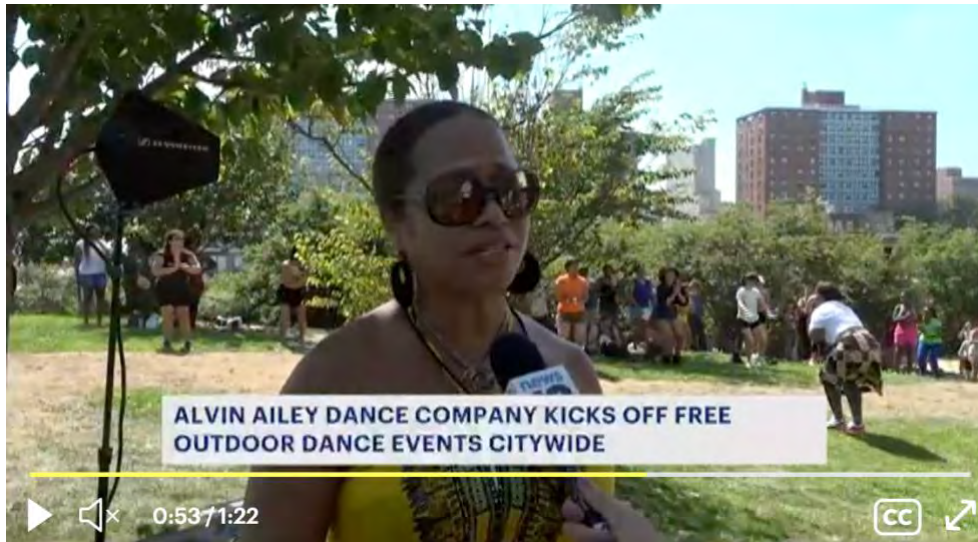
This segment aired on 7/25/22: <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/a-camp-founded-by-alvin-ailey-teaches-kids-dance-and-life-skills/> (4:25 minutes)

Newark is one of nine cities where AileyCamp is being held. Instead of going swimming or playing sports at a typical summer camp, some kids in Newark are spending their weeks out of school a little differently. They're learning various forms of dance and creative skills at AileyCamp, a six-week program that was started by the legendary dancer Alvin Ailey just before his passing in 1989.

Newark is one of nine cities in the country where the camp is taking place. It's the first time the camp is operating fully in person since the start of the pandemic. As well as immersing in dance, students also work on personal development. They'll get a chance to show off what they've learned during their final performance on Aug. 10 at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark.

### Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater kicks off series of outdoor events in city

July 23, 2022



This segment aired on 7/23/22: <https://brooklyn.news12.com/alvin-ailey-american-dance-theater-kicks-off-series-of-outdoor-events-in-city> (1:22 minutes)

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is beginning a series of outdoor events across the city Saturday. For the next 10 days, the dance company will be hosting a wide range of performances, dance classes, workshops, and free film screenings in the five boroughs. The outdoor events are free for the whole family through Aug. 1.

On Sunday, they are offering a Latin Dance workshop in the Bronx at 3 p.m. at the amphitheater in St. Mary's Park.

# THE DANCE ENTHUSIAST

## MOVING PEOPLE: Nasha Thomas on Her Favorite Performance with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Her Secret Talent, and "Revelations" Virtual Dance Workshop

By: Christine Jowers

March 31, 2021



Nasha Thomas oversees AileyCamp and designs the national outreach for Ailey's Arts In Education & Community Programs. As a primary liaison between the Ailey organization and the national arts-in-education community, she plays a central role in working with local communities to develop and run AileyCamp in cities across the U.S., as well as managing national residencies, leading workshops, and teaching master classes, helping Arts In Education reach over 100,000 people each year through education and community initiatives. A graduate of New York's High School of the Performing Arts and Southern Methodist University, she received the prestigious Presidential Scholar of the Arts award. At the invitation of Alvin Ailey and later under the direction of Judith Jamison, Ms. Thomas danced with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater from 1986 to 1998.

Highlighted as one of Good Housekeeping's "Humanitarians Who Are Our Heroes," Ms. Thomas combines her passion for inspiring the next generation and personal experiences as a performer and Master Teacher to lead Ailey Arts In Education programs in public school classrooms across the country to the Lincoln Center Plaza and from Gracie Mansion to the White House, and more. In 2020, Ms. Thomas reached students across the world virtually as she helped kicked off the 60th anniversary of Alvin Ailey's iconic Revelations with a social-distanced workshop streamed from the Rockefeller Center rooftop, with virtual programs for TED Discovery Series and Facebook, and was the lead instructor for the Revelations Virtual Dance Workshop Series, designed for middle school students blending dance with poetry, history, and music, which builds a foundation of artistic exploration that will enhance any students' academic experience.



1. *My earliest memory of dancing is \_\_\_\_\_.*

when I was around 6 years old, and I studied at the Bernice Johnson Cultural Arts Center in Jamaica, Queens

2. *I knew dance was my passion, and I had to be a dancer when \_\_\_\_\_.*

I went to college to continue my dance training and began auditioning after graduation.

3. *My favorite performance experience with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre was \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.*  
my first performance of the ballet Cry...we were in London, and my mother was in the audience. Having her in the audience was very special because Alvin Ailey choreographed this solo on Judith Jamison as a birthday gift to his mother.

4. *The most important aspect of Alvin Ailey, the person, for me \_\_\_\_\_.*

was his genuine love for people and his need to connect to his audience on a deep level beyond the stage

5. *I enjoy teaching virtual dance workshops in communities across the USA because \_\_\_\_\_.*

it allows us to continue our Arts In Education & Community outreach programs through Remote Learning Activities, and helps provide the youth a creative outlet they need during the pandemic which has forced so many restrictions on human interaction We launched several video lessons adapted from our Revelations Residency curriculum, which can be shared with teachers, students and organizations so they can learn about Alvin Ailey, his masterpiece Revelations, and create their own dances without having to book one of our in-person residencies. I had the pleasure of leading the Revelations Virtual Dance Workshop series with



*Ctrl + Click to watch video.*



another former company member, Michael Thomas, and we are thrilled to bring our popular residency program into homes across the country.

6. *I think what is most important to impart to young students, who are not necessarily going to be dancers, is \_\_\_\_\_.*  
the discipline, commitment, work ethic, respect, and resilience that the arts require, which are needed no matter your career path.

7. *I think students who want to be professional dance artists need to know \_\_\_\_\_.*  
nothing happens by osmosis, and it takes hard work as well as sacrifices.

8. *2020, the year of pandemics, taught me personally and professionally that \_\_\_\_\_.*  
giving up is not an option. When it's necessary, we must accept change and adapt although we are creatures of habit. I learned to do without many things I was used to having, and to find new interests to keep myself busy.

9. *What do you consider your greatest achievement thus far?*  
My greatest achievement has been to learn and embrace being selfless. Whether as a mother, wife, performer, teacher, supervisor, or mentor, I get the most rewards from giving, inspiring others, and being supportive.

10. *A truly good day for me starts with \_\_\_\_\_, has \_\_\_\_\_, and ends with \_\_\_\_\_.*  
Coffee....work that is fulfilling.....being grateful for the opportunity to do what I love.

11. *My favorite book and/or magazine is \_\_\_\_\_, and I like it because \_\_\_\_\_.*  
anything by British crime author Elizabeth George....I love a good 'who done it' novel!

12. *I long to travel to \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.*  
Australia...I think it's one of the most beautiful places in the world. I want to visit different cities there and learn about the culture.

13. *My biggest influences are \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.*  
the women who were my role models like my mother, my first dance teacher, Judith Jamison, and others ...they were intelligent, nurturing, giving; they pushed me to always be better, and were fearless.

14. *The most unexpected thing that ever happened to me when I was leading a large Ailey community workshop was \_\_\_\_\_.*  
in Atlanta when I was teaching a section of Alvin Ailey's Revelations to a class of high school boys. They came to class the next day and performed the solo "I Wanna Be Ready" that they had taught themselves from watching it on YouTube!

15. *My favorite non-dance pastime is \_\_\_\_\_.*  
hanging out with my 3 dogs.

16. *My most amazing, secret talent is \_\_\_\_\_.*  
I can braid hair really well.

17. *I question \_\_\_\_\_.*  
people who consider themselves to be superior to others, and who are mean and uncaring.

18. *If I weren't involved in the dance field, I would be very interested in exploring \_\_\_\_\_.*  
interior design.

19. *The most expressive part of the body is \_\_\_\_\_.*  
the face.

20. *What is the first thing you will do when you know that we no longer have to socially distance?*  
Hug my friends and family. I'm not a lover of too much physical contact normally, but I miss it now.



## Ailey Arts in Education & Community Programs offers 'Revelations' Virtual Dance Workshop Series

By: Laura Di Orio

March 22, 2021

Ailey Arts in Education & Community Programs has announced an inspiring new virtual series that expands available Remote Learning Activities for schools and organizations looking for alternatives to in-person dance classes and residencies, supplements to physical education offerings, or to provide an engaging extracurricular activity for students. Launching during Black History Month as Alvin Ailey's signature American masterpiece Revelations marks six decades, Revelations Virtual Dance Workshop Series furthers Ailey's mission of using dance to inspire, enlighten and entertain people of all backgrounds and ages.



Designed for middle school students, Revelations Virtual Dance Workshop Series blends dance with poetry, history, music and more, to build a foundation of artistic exploration that will enhance any student's academic experience. Led by master teachers and former Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater members Nasha Thomas and Michael Thomas, the series is adapted from the popular Revelations: An Interdisciplinary Approach curriculum, utilizing Alvin Ailey's signature work as an inspirational framework for a comprehensive study of language arts, social studies and dance.

With more than 20 years of experience teaching the curriculum, Nasha combines her passion of educating youth and personal experiences of performing Revelations with the Company to create a virtual experience for students that sparks creativity and critical thinking skills while introducing them to the work and life of Alvin Ailey in the context of American history.

In addition, Ailey Arts In Education & Community Programs already offers the AileyDance Kids Video Library residency package, designed for grades pre-K through 12 in various techniques such as ballet, West African, jazz/hip hop, percussion lecture demonstrations and more. Led by Ailey Arts in Education teaching artists and musicians, each residency package includes five lessons that can be implemented during one class period, seamlessly merging the fun and energy of in-school dance classes to online learning.



Live Remote Residencies and Customized Pre-Recorded Residencies are also available through Remote Learning Activities. Ailey Arts In Education teaching artists and musicians encourage students to practice imagination, resilience and joy while learning fundamental dance vocabulary and dynamic original choreography from the safety of their home or socially distanced classroom.

Ailey Arts In Education remains committed to providing quality dance education and empower students to take, make and see dance, through whatever means possible. Aligned with the NYC DOE Blueprint for Dance and the New York State Learning Standards for the Arts, Ailey Arts In Education provides a safe physical, emotional and creative outlet for students of all ages and backgrounds.



*Ctrl + Click to watch video.*



## AileyDance for Active Seniors: Dance from and back to the people

By: Kathryn Boland

July 1, 2020



“Dance came from the people and should always be delivered back to the people,” Alvin Ailey said. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, a key part (but not all of) his legacy, works by this ethos. “Dance is for everybody,” asserts Cathryn Williams, director of Arts in Education and Community Programs at Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation. Amongst many other programs offering dance across the five boroughs of NYC, her department offers AileyDance for Active Seniors.

Through the initiative, senior citizens across NYC have the opportunity to move for better physical health, boost their brain health, and have a creative and expressive outlet. Dance Informa spoke with Williams and Amos Macahanic Jr., an Ailey Arts in Education and Community Programs teaching artist, Ailey Extension Horton instructor and a former Ailey company member.

Williams explains how the idea for AileyDance for Active Seniors began six years ago as part of a five-year strategic plan for the Ailey organization, developed under the leadership of Ailey Executive Director Bennett Rink. She shares how offerings in the program include movement classes, culminating performances for participants, and opportunities to see live performances of Ailey, Ailey II and The Ailey School’s Professional Division students. Williams emphasizes how with cognitive decline and mental/emotional effects such as loneliness, having a creative outlet is crucial.



Movement can be particularly powerful because even with forgetting details such as dates, “you don’t forget how you feel” and that it can be “profound to express your own stories through movement,” she believes. Machanic emphasizes how senior citizens are often (unintentionally) forgotten in our culture. “It’s so important to give them a voice and a creative outlet,” he believes. He notes that the program’s offerings can give people access to what the company can provide when mobility issues might limit them from visiting the theater.

Williams shares how she gives teachers a framework for the classes but also encourages them to make the classes their own within that framework. In fact, she sees it as their responsibility to “breathe life into” the classes. The framework, which Williams hopes to build into a curriculum, most often consists of a beginning check-in when all participants can share a bit about how they’re doing. Following that is often a verbal prompt for movement, such as “I remember a time when...” Williams recounts a meaningful instance of that prompt leading a participant to share how when very young, her family came to the U.S. through fleeing oppression in Soviet Russia.

Machanic describes using a “word wall,” allowing participants to each throw out a word or words as prompts for movement — such as “what do you think of with the word ‘dance’?” He works with Teaching Artist Heather Bryce, whom Williams says has used poems as movement prompts. Williams also describes “accumulation dance” as a technique that the classes employ, adding participants’ movements on top of one another to make movement phrases.



If participants are independently mobile, tableaux are also possible, she says. Teaching participants about aspects such as levels in space and movement dynamics also adds an educational component that keeps their brains stimulated, key for helping to fight off memory decline, she adds. Williams says that teachers also sometimes show videos of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater dancing iconic Ailey pieces such as Revelations and then teach the participants adapted versions of certain sections.

As other ways to keep the classes flowing and beneficial for participants, Machanic explains the importance of “keeping feelers out” for what students would enjoy and what would nurture them. For instance, if a participant says “ragtime” on their “word wall”, he and Bryce might discuss and say, “Let’s bring in ragtime for the warm-up”. He also underscored the importance of



being flexible with the format, because classes can go in unexpected directions. To be most effective, the teaching artists need to make adaptations. Machanic also mentioned certain classes are for senior citizens and their caregivers, and some are for caregivers alone. These classes offer meaningful self-care for people who give so much, and need to refresh and refill to keep giving.

Then it comes to culminating performances, which Williams said importantly “validate [participants’] experience” and allow them to share with their family and friends. Machanic added that the performances also create community in assisted living homes, allowing different floors of residents to connect and to share. For him, it’s incredibly meaningful to see this community connect. It’s also special for him to see the growth in his students — physically, mentally, spiritually — from the first class to the performance. He also noted an important atmosphere of “no pressure” sharing, that’s it okay if someone misses a movement. “The goal is to see a light turn on in them — we know that’s the way in,” he affirmed.

What this kind of movement classes offer that fitness classes for seniors can’t seem to be a valid question. Williams believes that apart from the culminating performances and opportunities to see performance (live and via video), they offer the important elements of aesthetic engagement, imagination, emotion, and of narrative and personal story — while still offering the same important physical benefits (increased flexibility, strength, balance, and mobility).

Machanic underscored how these classes also remind all involved how “everyone has something to say,” and gives them a spiritually safe space to do so. In this line of thinking, a senior citizen reaching an arm can be as meaningful as a huge leap from a young, lithe dancer. All of that said, Williams was clear that the approach here stands apart from Dance/Movement Therapy, a formalized clinical field that works with and through set clinical goals as well as theoretical and empirical frameworks.

Several times, Machanic noted the joy and appreciation of participants. He believes that he’s seen them “come alive” and “transform before [his] eyes.” He also described seeing them “lift each other up”, which can be incredibly touching — such as a resident who was a former dancer helping older, less mobile residents. Machanic also described dancers attesting to practicing outside of classes, demonstrating the classes reaching far beyond the time they are held in participants’ lives. Williams recounted striking instances of the classes’ physical benefits such as a participant recovering from an operation far faster than her doctor would have thought.

In a longer-range vision, Williams would love to bring the classes to senior citizens in cities where the company tours, through residencies. Wherever it all goes, AileyDance for Active Seniors, under the umbrella of Arts In Education and Community Programs, is a key component of bringing dance back to the people — as Ailey believed, after all, it came from them. It lives in all of us, however young or old.

For more information on AileyDance for Active Seniors, head to [www.alvinailey.org/about/arts-education-community-programs/aileydance-active-seniors](http://www.alvinailey.org/about/arts-education-community-programs/aileydance-active-seniors).



**Professional dance instructors guide students through historic choreography**  
November 2, 2019



Watch here: <https://www.ketv.com/article/professional-dance-instructors-guide-students-through-historic-choreography/29675973> (1 minute)

Nasha Thomas, National Director of AileyCamp programs, leads Omaha students in a *Revelations* workshop – exploring Mr. Ailey’s signature ballet.



## Documentary exposing racism in Rosedale goes viral 40 years later; Alvin Ailey summer camp program spotlight

By: Marvin Scott and Roie Opperman

August 9, 2019



The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is known the world over for its vibrant company of dancers dedicated to preserving the uniqueness of the African American cultural experience. Founder Alvin Ailey was a pioneer of programs promoting arts in education, particularly those benefiting underserved communities. For more than 30 years, a nationwide summer program has also been offering inner city children the chance to enrich their lives through dance.

We hear from the national director of AileyCamp, Nasha Thomas, and one of this year's campers, Jada-Ann Parker, on what this program means to all those who participate.

Watch here: <https://pix11.com/2019/08/09/documentary-exposing-racism-in-roosedale-goes-viral-40-years-later-alvin-ailey-summer-camp-program-spotlight/> (Nasha Thomas interview at 18:57)





## Teens Find Their “Voice” Through The Power Of The Arts At AileyCamp Miami

By: Marybel Rodriguez

August 1, 2019



The lives of more than a thousand underserved students have been strengthened thanks to Ailey Camp Miami at the Adrienne Arsht Center.

The six-week program strives to provide a safe and artistic environment for campers through the arts. “We want them to understand they are powerful young people,” said Jairo Ontiveros with Ailey Camp Miami. That’s what’s instilled in the minds and hearts of the more than 115 students taking part in the free paid scholarship camp offered to all Miami-Dade County public school students.

Every movement and each choreography represents an accomplishment for these campers but for many of them, it is not only about dancing. “They tackle bullying, conflict resolution, peer pressure, drug use, and abuse. Social issues middle schoolers go through and are not talked about in the classroom,” said Ontiveros.

The 11 to 14-year-olds also work on their personal development and are challenged throughout the six weeks, with the power of the arts, to be a voice for themselves. “I love dancing so I came here to fulfill my dream,” said Quaden John. But little did John know that he would be dancing away with so much more.

“When I first came to Ailey Camp Miami I was so shy, I didn’t want to be by nobody, but these people introduced me to everybody to talk to,” said John.

The same goes for Gina Diaz. “I suffer from ADD and I take a good amount of medicine for it and I haven’t been on my medication at all this summer. It’s also helped me to come out and be more positive and more involved in my community and everything around me,” said Diaz.

That is their goal here at Ailey Camp Miami for each student to keep shining far beyond the stage. The camp ends on with a final performance at the Arsht Center on Saturday.

Watch here: <https://miami.cbslocal.com/2019/08/01/teens-voice-power-arts-ailey-camp-miami/> (2 minutes)



## Summer camp uses dance to teach students life skills

By Andrea Smith

July 22, 2019

Of all the mantras Anai Espinoza and her fellow campers recite each morning at AileyCamp, the eighth grader's favorite is this: "I am in control."

"It makes me believe I have the power to choose the right thing," she said.

Anai is one of a thousand students in 10 states this summer attending AileyCamp, a free six-week program for youngsters in financial need or with academic, social or family challenges.



CTRL + Click photo to watch: *Youth camp teaches dance, life skills*

AileyCamp was founded in 1989 in Kansas City, Missouri, by world-renowned dancer, choreographer and director Alvin Ailey, who died later that year. In addition to teaching the students dance, the camp introduces them to the visual arts, creative writing and other communications skills. It also teaches them how to eat well, resolve conflicts and become leaders, according to a description of the program on the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater website.

Atlanta Ballet's Centre For Dance Education has admitted about 100 students to its camp each summer since 2014. About half of those have some exposure to dance, but very few have professional training, said Atlanta AileyCamp director Diane Carroll Sales.

"The most important thing is to accept campers that are willing to dance — they want to dance — because we are dancing most of the day," Sales said. "But the core of the program is personal development."

The Atlanta camp ran this year from May 30 through July 5, concluding with a performance July 6 in the city of Jonesboro, about 15 miles (24 kilometers) south of Atlanta. Sponsors covered the cost of dance training and attire, breakfast and lunch, field trips and classes for creative communication and personal development.

At the end of camp, Atlanta Ballet offers 10 students a full-tuition scholarship for a year of training, which is eligible for renewal, Sales said. One scholarship covers \$800-\$2,300 worth of dance classes, depending on the placement level.



Kameron Davis attended his first AileyCamp about 10 years ago, when he was in middle school, at The Fox Theatre in Atlanta. He trained for three years after that with the Atlanta Ballet on a scholarship, and later became a dance instructor. Davis said he doesn't think his mother could have afforded dance classes without the scholarship.

Kids at school teased Davis when he began dancing, but AileyCamp offered a safe haven and confidence boost, he said. He said he enjoys giving back to the program by helping new campers build their confidence.

"It's an open door to finding new things, doing new things," Davis said. "When I got to AileyCamp, it just reassured me that, 'Hey, it's OK. Everybody is different. You shouldn't be judged by what you do just because not a lot of people do it.'"

Also ran in [ABC News](#), [The Washington Post](#) and [Miami Herald](#).



## Pre-teens dance through summer at Atlanta Ballet's Ailey Camp

By: Paul Milliken

June 19, 2019



AileyCamp is presented as a partnership between Atlanta Ballet and the famed Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and provides 100 local middle schoolers (ages 11 to 14) from underserved communities the chance to attend a six-week summer camp for free.

Two segments ran on Good Day Atlanta. Watch both clips here: <http://www.fox5atlanta.com/good-day/pre-teens-dance-through-summer-at-atlanta-ballets-aileycamp>



# The New York Times

## The Passionate Humility of Solomon Dumas

By: Gia Kourlas

December 28, 2018

2 TELEVISION

Netflix's global ambitions for Turkish dramas.

BY ALEX MARSHALL



4 DANCE

Ascending from Alvin Ailey summer camp to the main stage. BY GIA KOURLAS

## The Passionate Humility of Solomon Dumas

This Alvin Ailey dancer, the first to go from AileyCamp to the main company, has had a breakout season with leading roles in two major premieres.

By GIA KOURLAS

A dancer isn't always born a dancer. Sometimes a mother has to step in.

Growing up on the South Side of Chicago with his single working mother, Solomon Dumas was involved in community theater and interested in the arts. But dance wasn't much of a presence in his life until his mother signed him up for AileyCamp, when he was 12.

"She made me go," Mr. Dumas said. "My mother kept me busy. There wasn't a lot of idle time. She kept me in programs."

AileyCamp turned out to be a good choice.

"After that camp, I was completely obsessed," he said. "We learned discipline through dance and we started each day with affirmations. I remember receiving a souvenir program book, and I had never seen so many beautiful people in my life. I said, Oh my gosh, they look like me. Or I want to look like them. There was this ele-

'He doesn't dance small and he doesn't apologize when he's dancing. It's like butter and fire at the same time.'

RONALD K. BROWN  
CHOREOGRAPHER



gance, this sophistication. And that was something that I needed to see at that time."

Mr. Dumas, nearing his third year in Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, is the only member to have started as an Ailey camper and gone on to join the main company. (AileyCamps — there were 10 in 2018 — are summer day camps for ages 11-14.) "I didn't realize I forced him," his mother, Beverly Rogers, said laughing. "It was just he went wherever I said to go. He never complained. He may have grunted a little bit, but I didn't pay that any attention."

Ms. Rogers can't say that she knew he was a dancer or an actor as a child, but recalled that before he could walk, whenever he heard music, he would bounce.

At 30, Mr. Dumas seems to have retained some of that bounce. Even when seated for an interview in the lounge at New York City Center — where the Ailey company's season continues through Sunday — his body



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JKE EDEANI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES





was full of vibrations that extended to slender fingers drumming rhythms on a table or gesticulating into the air. It's an energy that has been radiating from the stage this season, a spectacular one for Mr. Dumas, who danced leading parts in new works by Ronald K. Brown ("The Call") and Rennie Harris ("Lazarus").

Created as part of the company's 60th anniversary, and each in its way a homage to Ailey, they are two of the most important and affecting dances of the year — not just at the Ailey company, but period. They're meaningful, even masterly additions to the repertory, giving the company something to sink its physical and emotional weight into. That came through in the dancing, which was full of reverence and urgency.

In both premieres, Mr. Dumas showed his range, his unforced strength and his quiet, simmering power. He isn't flashy; his grounded presence is what makes him so beguiling. Robert Battle, the company's artistic director, said he had been especially moved by Mr. Dumas this season. "I almost didn't recognize him in a good way," Mr. Battle said. "He's kind of a chameleon."

The circumstances under which Mr. Dumas performed the lead in "The Call" were stressful. The morning of its premiere was just an ordinary day when he noticed that Masazumi Chaya, the group's associate artistic director, was watching company class. That was odd enough, but stranger still was that Mr. Chaya was watching him.

It turned out that Jamar Roberts, scheduled to dance the lead, was injured, and Mr. Brown, the choreographer, wanted Mr. Du-

mas to take over. Mr. Dumas was panicked. He didn't know the steps; his focus had been on his part in the dance's trio.

"I had to basically learn it within an hour," Mr. Dumas said. "I was like, 'I'm not ready, I'm not ready.'" But Mr. Brown pulled him aside. "When he asked me, I couldn't say no," said Mr. Dumas, who used to be a member of Mr. Brown's company. "You don't say no to Ron."

The two first worked together when Mr. Dumas was a student at the Ailey school. After Mr. Dumas completed two years with Ailey II, the company's junior division, he joined Mr. Brown's troupe. "I just waited my turn," Mr. Brown said.

Mr. Dumas knows about waiting his turn: His path to the main company hasn't been a direct one. After his AileyCamp experience, he attended the Chicago Academy for the Arts as well as at the Russell Talbert Dance Studio, where he continued his training after school. There, his focus was ballet. "I was in the studio until about 9 p.m. every day, even sometimes on Sundays."

Before he trained at the Ailey school, he was a member of Garth Fagan Dance. After leaving Mr. Brown's company, he was weighing his options: He was an instructor at Barry's Bootcamp, and had started acting classes. But there was an Ailey audition and he decided to go. It was his fifth try, and there was only one male spot open.

"I always thought if I got into the company it would be during this mass exodus when there were maybe four spots," he said. "I never thought that I would be the one guy. Because I wasn't the tall guy. I wasn't the

leggy guy. I was never that dancer known for the tricks and the things you would associate Ailey with."

Yet for Mr. Brown, he has a kind of passionate humility. "He goes for broke, but not like he's trying to impress you — and not like he even knows," he said. "He takes over the stage and is still kind of unassuming. He doesn't dance small and he doesn't apologize when he's dancing. It's like butter and fire at the same time."

This season, Mr. Dumas said he was grateful to spend so much time in the studio with choreographers like Mr. Brown, Mr. Harris and Twyla Tharp, who worked with him closely on "The Golden Section" (1981). The day she arrived was a memorable one. "I open the piece and as soon as I went across the floor, she stopped the music," he said. "I said, Oh God, this is the most embarrassing thing. She came to me and said: 'Look at me. You're holding back.'"

He started over; she stopped the music again and told him again, more firmly, that he was holding back. "And then I did it" — he snapped his fingers — "I don't know what clicked in. She said, 'That's what I'm talking about.' She kind of broke me down."

Ms. Tharp worked with the company for a week and spent so much time with Mr. Dumas that Mr. Battle said he wondered, "Is she going to take him and leave with him?" She taught him about daring: The difference between simply performing a role and dancing like you're not afraid to fall down.

But while Mr. Dumas is enjoying such challenges, he said he's not one of those dancers who plans to stay in the company for 20 years. "Hell, no," he said, laughing. But "only because there are so many other things that I want to do dance-wise — and everything else."

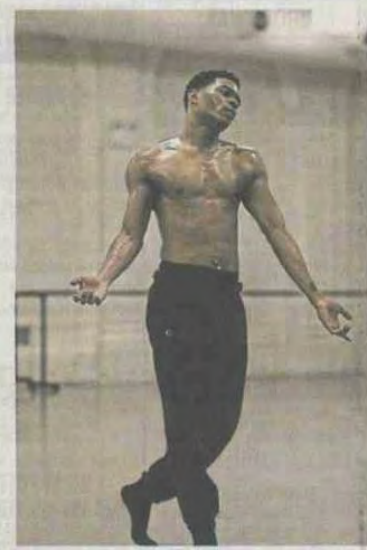
At the same time, he knows that, well, you never know. He said he was shocked when Mr. Battle hired him.

"I did have an emotional moment because I thought back to being an Ailey camper," he said of learning the news in Mr. Battle's office. "I still have his handkerchief. He told me that he liked my dancing and that he had no idea that I was coming. There were no preconceived ideas or notions — I wasn't on the radar. I just came in and he said, 'Wow — O.K., I'll go with him.' I'm so glad he took the chance."

Clockwise from top left, Solomon Dumas of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. He danced leading roles in Rennie Harris's "Lazarus" and Ronald K. Brown's "The Call" this season. Mr. Dumas, below, with Jacqueline Green in the premiere of "The Call."



ANDREA MOHIN/THE NEW YORK TIMES





## Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Brings Dance Residencies to New Jersey Middle Schools August 2018

DT notes | NEWS



Nasha Thomas  
and student

### Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Brings Dance Residencies to New Jersey Middle Schools

Starting in the 2018–19 school year, Ailey's Arts In Education & Community Programs will bring 10-week residencies to 7th- and 8th-grade students at South Orange and Maplewood middle schools in New Jersey. Students can elect to take two classes per week (for 10 weeks) with Ailey Arts In Education artists, who will introduce them to the history of the company, Horton technique and AAADT's signature technique/style. They will be able to share what they learned at a culminating presentation at South Orange Performing Arts Center.

"Mr. Ailey's idea is that dance comes from the people, and that it should be delivered back to them," says Nasha Thomas, spokesperson and master teacher for Arts In Education. "It has always been his mission and our mission to make sure that we are connected to the community and staying in touch with the public."

Since 1992, The Ailey Organization's Arts in Education programs have brought dance to more than 100,000 youths across the New York metropolitan area.

### National Endowment for the Arts Chooses New Director of Dance

**Sara C. Nash**, former program director of dance at the New England Foundation for the Arts, has been appointed director of dance for the National Endowment for the Arts this month. Her past experience as a funder, producer and project director for the arts includes managing the USArtists International grant program at Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation and working as a senior producer at Dance Theater Workshop.

As director of dance, Nash will oversee the grants portfolio that in past years has included more than 165 grants and \$4.2 million dollars. Nash will replace the NEA's previous director of dance, Douglas Sonntag, who retired in March 2017.

## Good News for the Arts!

### Congress Proposes Increase in NEA Funding

With support from 166 members of Congress, the National Endowment for the Arts budget is proposed at nearly \$153 million for the 2019 fiscal year—a \$2 million increase from 2018.

As all dance teachers know, NEA grants are vital to the health of the dance community. Some recent funding examples include: Dance Institute of Washington, for \$15,000; Broadway Dance Lab, for \$10,000; and Luna Dance Institute's Dance Teaching and Learning Studies Professional Development, for \$20,000.

### The Arts Contribute Billions to New York State Economy

According to data released by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and the National Endowment for the Arts, New York State's arts and cultural industries generate \$114.1 billion for its economy. The arts employ 462,584 individuals, award \$46.7 billion in compensation and account for 7.8 percent of the total state wealth—more than retail, construction or transportation. The report also shows that New York State accounts for 15 percent of the \$760 billion generated by the arts nationwide.

Photo by Joe Epstein, courtesy of Ailey Arts in Education



## Mentoring Matters: Former AileyCamp Dancer Happily Giving Back To Younger Students

August 28, 2018



Watch here: <https://miami.cbslocal.com/2018/08/28/mentoring-matters-aileycamp/> (3 ½ minutes)

MIAMI (CBSMiami) – Standing on the stage where she first learned how to dance, 17-year old Dymon Smith softly describes her passion for the arts. “I found my heart in dance. It’s been my breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day. I can’t imagine my life without it,” she said.

Smith is a student at the New World School of the Arts but it was on this stage where she voluntarily spent six weeks of her summer mentoring and training younger dancers at AileyCamp Miami. Just a few years ago, Dymon was an Ailey camper. She was 10-years old when she was introduced to the power of dance.

“I never danced before AileyCamp. I started when I was ten years old. This was my first experience of being in dance and different techniques as jazz and ballet. I was all new to it and it really pushed me and challenged me because everyone around me they probably already had the dance training,” said Dymon.

Ailey’s Summer Camp led Dymon to train at the Polly Mays Conservatory of the arts for her middle school years and her training there got her admitted to New World where she is excelling and starting her senior year.

She says she didn’t hesitate when she got the call from AileyCamp to come back and mentor.

“It was really emotional because this is where I started, so to come back was like everything,” said Dymon.

This is the first year in its 10-year history that the program added mentors to its program.

Dymon adds that what motivated her to mentor was the opportunity to teach and share her experiences with younger aspiring dancers.

“They see a lot of me in them and they know like wow she was here she was here she was on this exact stage, so we can learn a lot from her and to just teach them to always push themselves and to never give up,” said Dymon.

This summer, AileyCamp at the Arsht Center celebrated 10 years of bringing the free 6-week program to local students ages 11 to 14 to learn dance and explore their creativity.

The camp is free and funded by private donations. The goal is to give students who could not otherwise afford it the opportunity to gain self-confidence, and connect with local artists who instruct the students during the camp.



Middle-schooler Trinity Cidell says AileyCamp has helped transform her over the last two years

“Yeah, they are like family here, it’s a lot of support and a lot of people that I have really like best friends with now, I grew here because I was really shy. Last year, I was really shy and then I came back and then all of my other friends were here and then I was so happy,” said Trinity.

Trinity says she was thrilled when she found out Dymon would be her mentor

“She is amazing, she is a wonderful dancer and then she’s really a really good spirit and she is really nice and I absolutely love her,” said Trinity.

Dymon describes her mentee Trinity as a triple threat

“Trinity is a beautiful soul. She is a triple threat. She likes to dance, sing, and act. She wants to go to FAMU and I told her just to be yourself and to always follow your heart. She’s very energetic. She makes me laugh. All the Miami mentees make me laugh, they are all energetic, and they all have something special that they can give,” said Dymon.

Trinity and Dymon are just one example of founder, dancer and choreographer Alvin Ailey’s vision, which is to use the power of dance to enrich and positively impact the lives of children.

Trinity says she walks away from the camp with one special takeaway and that is not to use the word “can’t” to define her possibilities.

The camp is funded by private donations through the Adrienne Arsht Center.

If you would like to donate please head to this website: <http://www.arshtcenter.org/Education-Community-Engagement/Programs/AileyCamp-Miami/Ailey-Camp-Miami/>



ABC 7 CHICAGO

## Ailey Dance Camp provides positive outlet for West Side kids

By: Marissa N. Isang

August 2, 2018



The Alvin Ailey Dance Camp has been using the power of dance to positively impact the lives of children in the North Lawndale neighborhood for the last three years, offering a creative outlet and making ABC7 Eyewitness News Chicago Proud.

Kids like Ryan Southworth are wrapping up the free six-week Ailey dance camp sponsored by the West Side Cultural Foundation. "I've learned a lot of technique and how to respect myself and respect others," Southworth said.

"The program is for 100 students ages 11-14 and they teach West African, jazz, ballet dance and in addition to dance they have workshops on leadership, self-discipline and communication as well," said Natashee Scott, president and CEO of the Westside Cultural Foundation.

The Westside Cultural Foundation came together with the Chicago Park District, the Steans Family Foundation, the AUSL Network Schools, 24th ward alderman Michael Scott and Chicago LAMP (Lawndale AMACHI Mentoring Program) to make the camp happen.

Scott said no previous dance experience is required of the students; only the commitment of themselves and their parents. Having a program like this means more to the community than just a summer of fun.

"It means everything for me to have this in the West Side so we can change the narrative of the West Side of Chicago," Scott said. "Focus on it being a safe and peaceful community of people who care about one another and a destination for arts and culture."

Participants are learning from experienced Ailey-trained dancers about the art of movement and the history behind the dance.

"One of the things I think we do is we engage them to understand what the theme is, which is joy. Then we allow them to be themselves inside of that so they can feel comfortable enough that we can teach them what movement is," said Dereque Whiturs, an Ailey dancer and camp instructor.

Instructors hope dance builds confidence and provides a safe space for kids to be themselves. "Maybe take them away from some of the stuff that is happening in their community that is not so positive and give them an outlet to where they can be themselves and be positive. Then maybe learn that this is something they want to do on a regular basis," Whiturs said.

"People my age grow up around bad things and end up in gangs and stuff and I think that Ailey camp really prevents that," Southworth said. Students would like to invite all of you to their free final performance tomorrow at Collins Academy. You can catch a show at 1 p.m. or 7 p.m.

Watch here: <http://abc7chicago.com/entertainment/ailey-dance-camp-provides-positive-outlet-for-west-side-kids/3863459/>

# The Miami Times

## Camping With A Quilt

By: Kishanda Burns

July 25-31, 2018

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The Miami Times

MIAMITIMESONLINE.COM | JULY 25-31, 2018



AlleyCampers sign the quilt they made on July 18 at the Adrienne Arsht Center for Performing Arts of Miami-Dade

Miami Times photos/ Kishanda Burns

# CAMPING WITH A QUILT

ALVIN AILEY MIAMI SUMMER STUDENTS UNVEIL THE 4,000-SQUARE-FOOT MURAL MADE FROM FABRIC

KISHANDA BURNS  
digital@miamitimesonline.com

The campers came, sewed and stitched to create a quilt to celebrate AlleyCamp Miami's 10th anniversary.

The young dancers presented the quilt on July 18 in front of an audience of parents and relatives.

AlleyCamp Miami is a six-week, full scholarship program that is funded by the Adrienne Arsht Center

for Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County. During the time, campers work to boost their self-confidence and become fluent in West African, jazz, modern and ballet dance routines.

And now they know how to make a quilt.

Camp staff and faculty brainstormed the making of the quilt by their charges.

"It's something that we came up with as a team," said Assistant Vice President of

Education and Community Engagement Jairo Ontiveros as he spoke about the quilt. "Celebrating our 10th summer, we wanted to visualize and make visible the uniqueness of the program, but also the objective of the program and that is to help kids that are ages 11-14 boost them, their self-confidence and get them prepared before they go into their high school years."

The finished quilt will be displayed in the Knight Concert

Hall of the Arsht Center.

The camp usually culminates with a free performance, this year set for 7 p.m. Aug. 4 at the Adrienne Arsht Center.

Before the presentation of the 4,000-square-foot quilt, John Richards, the Arsht Center's president and CEO, praised the camp and campers.

Richards is credited for bringing AlleyCamp to the Arsht Center.

"The center has raised, believe it or not, over \$3 million over this 10 year for a thousand kids to participate," said Richards.

Following Richard's speech was the presentation of the quilt.

As campers gently place the quilt down on stage, "oohs" were heard as they reacted to the quilt that was made by them.

The youth screamed "To Miami with joy" as they

placed their painted-white hands on the quilt. They were also able to sign the quilt.

Ontiveros explained the quilt's construction.

"The individual patches were made by each of the campers," said Ontiveros. "There are three different layers. When they first got to camp, it was one of their first activities. Each camper got a retraceable paper and they traced their face. They lined

SEE AILEY 6C



Two students in AlleyCamp sign the quilt they made on July 18 at the Adrienne Arsht Center for Performing Arts of Miami-Dade.



A camper at AlleyCamp Miami produces beats with a bucket.

## AILEY

CONTINUED FROM 2C

up all the windows along the Knight Concert Hall. The natural light that comes into the Arsht Center was the perfect setting for them to be able to trace their faces. From there, they took the list of superlatives and affirmatives that they had created for themselves and then layered that on top, so there are two different pieces of drawing that each camper has that was then translated to the actual fabric of the quilt."

Julius Pascal, 13, a camper at AlleyCamp said that he felt special, especially since this is only his first year at the summer camp.

"I feel brought in. That quilt will be in this building for a long time. I feel committed to being at AlleyCamp," said Julius. "It's so crazy because everything I learn here, I have never learned before."

Parents say the camp has changed their children's lives.

Tasheba Poulainne, 35, and mother of camper Joy Poulainne, 12, said, her daughter has blossomed over the six weeks of camp.

"It has made a big impact on her life because she's very shy and timid at times, and I feel like it kind of brought her self-confidence to where it used to be," said Poulainne. "So I appreciate AlleyCamp for that."



## NYC Dance Company Gives Back to Community With Camp

July 24, 2018



WNBC Anchor Jummy Olabanji goes behind the scenes at AileyCamp New York for an inside look on how the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater continues to give back to the community.

Watch here: [https://www.nbcnewyork.com/on-air/as-seen-on/NYC-Dance-Company-Gives-Back-to-Community-With-Camp\\_New-York-489055521.html](https://www.nbcnewyork.com/on-air/as-seen-on/NYC-Dance-Company-Gives-Back-to-Community-With-Camp_New-York-489055521.html)





## **AileyCamp celebrates 30 years of teaching kids to dance**

July 11, 2018



THE BRONX - The prestigious Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's AileyCamp is celebrating its 30th anniversary.

About 1,000 kids citywide are participating in the weekslong, free summer program to learn the art of different types of dance, including ballet, modern, jazz and West African.

The kids will get to show off what they learned with a performance next month at the Hostos Center for the Arts & Culture.

This year marks 60 years since the dance company was founded. AileyCamp was the last foundation created by Ailey before his death in 1989.

Organizers say the camp is made possible by funding through Children's Aid.

Watch here: <http://bronx.news12.com/story/38624750/aileycamp-celebrates-30-years-of-teaching-kids-to-dance>



## These 10 Humanitarians Are Our Heroes — And They're All Over 50

By: Melissa Walker

April 6, 2018

What will you do in this decade?

These phenomenal women are at #theperfectage to level the playing fields for everyone with experience, wisdom and heart – watch them work.



### The Dancing Director

**Nasha Thomas, 55, former ballet dancer and National Director of AileyCamp, an Alvin Ailey summer camp based in dance for underserved youth.**

"At 55, I have patience, gratitude, and the ability to let things go. This year's program theme is 'joy,' so I've been thinking about everyday things that can connect the kids with joy. I like bacon, being in the sun, and not wearing shoes. Being able to tap into those simple joys with the kids is why I love mentoring even more than performing."

*Wardrobe:* Systematic Organic Tank, EILEEN FISHER, \$68; Jacket and Pants, WILFRED AT ARTIZIA; Addaz Sandals, ALIAS MAE, \$190



## So You Think You Can't Dance? The Alvin Ailey Company Has Other Ideas

By: Louise Kennedy

March 21, 2018

In my head, I am a lovely dancer: graceful, elegant, deeply attuned to the music. My feet, however, tend to disagree.

I was reminded of this tragic reality during a recent workshop with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. The company is back in town celebrating the 50th anniversary of its first performance in Boston, and a key part of that celebration was to offer two community workshops last month. The opportunity was irresistible: Join scores of other people, some trained dancers and some not, to learn some of the movements from the Ailey company's most famous piece, "Revelations."



Dance like an Ailey dancer! How could I say no?

So there I was, on a lovely Saturday afternoon, in Dorchester's Salvation Army Kroc Center Gym. With me was my 9-year-old daughter, TT, who can already dance circles around me -- as I was about to find out.

After a lively performance by the St. Paul AME Church choir, Nasha Thomas, a former Ailey dancer and current master teacher, invited us all down from the bleachers to the gym floor. More than 100 dancers walked down, leaving an assortment of parents, grandparents, friends and siblings to watch.

As Thomas introduced fellow teacher Cheryl Rowley-Gaskins and started to explain what we'd be doing, I glanced around at my fellow dancers, a little nervous to see quite a few professional-looking leotards and footless tights. (That's what they're called, right?) My own outfit I'd cobbled together in a mild panic that morning, with a sports bra that's older than TT, some stretched-out leggings and a tank top I picked entirely on the basis of its long, asset-concealing tail.

It was gratifying, however, to see a few bodies that looked more like mine — and, even better, to see people of all ages and many skin tones coming together for this experience. One of the depressingly unchanging realities of life in Boston is how racially segregated we remain, in the arts as everywhere else, and I'm always grateful for moments that break that pattern. This was one of them.

It was also, once we started moving, at once exhilarating and humbling. Oh, I did fine with the first few warmup exercises: stretching, reaching, wriggling, even striking a random pose on cue. (That last one was easy; I just did what I always do on the dance floor, which is to come up with the most ridiculous move I can think of in hopes that people will mistake any clumsiness for brilliant self-parody.)



And even the first few moments of the first dance felt just fine. Bow your head, then raise it, back, back, back, as your arms come up. I can do it! I'm dancing "Revelations"! Well, part of it, anyway: the beginning of the solemn, sorrowful movement, "I Been 'Buked," that opens the first of the piece's three sections.

But once we moved on to the second piece, "Wade in the Water," my newfound confidence took a hit. First you walk forward, slowly, hands clasped. No problem. But then comes this move that apparently involves joints and ligaments I simply don't possess — or, if I do, I have ignored them for so many years that they were not about to pay attention to me just because I asked.

I sneaked a look around. In unison, a hundred pelvises thrust forward, then back, in a single fluid motion, one apparently so simple that even a child could do it. My child! There she was, intently focused and moving right along with the crowd, as I jerked my hips along in a pathetically failed attempt to follow her lead.

Oh well. On to the next. Very exciting: We'd been given fans at the start of the day, and now we were going to get to use them, for the rousing "Rocka My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham." I love this song! I can do this dance! I can ... oh. I can do the first bit.



A little fanning, a little stepping – but then comes the moment that, I realize in a flash, I have been dreading since I first signed up for this workshop: As I confidently twirl around to my left, every single other dancer is twirling to the right.

Oh, the embarrassment. The shame. The horror. Except that no one is looking at me. Everyone is focused on the dance.

And finally, finally, I get it.

It's not about whether I'm doing it perfectly; it's about doing it the best I can, with my whole self, in a sea of people all doing their best, with their whole selves. It's not a test. It's a dance.

And what a dance. I shrug off my anxiety, my disappointment with my aging and awkward body, my incessant and irritating self-consciousness, and I hear the music, and I dance. Oh, I dance. You should have seen me.

Well, actually, it's probably best that you didn't. But you should definitely see "Revelations."

Even if you've seen it before — and you may well have, since the Ailey company says it's the most-performed modern dance in the world. It will be performed again, Thursday through Sunday, at the Boch Center Wang Theatre, along with other works old and new, including the Boston premiere of "Victoria" on Friday and Saturday nights, and a new production of "The Golden Section" on Thursday and Sunday.



Those performances are presented by Celebrity Series, the Boston institution that first brought Ailey to Boston a half-century ago. Ailey, and his "Revelations," are part of the city's history now — and worth making part of your own history as well.

As we were leaving the gym, still exhilarated from the dance, I asked TT what she thought.

"It was different from what I expected," she said, "but I liked it."

Me too.



# The Miami Herald

## AileyCamp Miami welcomes its first camper with Down syndrome

By: Brooke Henderson

August 4, 2017

*AileyCamp boosts kids' confidence through dance. Here's how you can watch them shine.*



Dance is what makes Kristina Lahoud come alive. Whenever she hears music, especially Rihanna, she can't help but move with the beat.

"Even at school, to get her to go up on stage to get her diploma, they said they should have turned on some music so she could walk across," her mother Nicola Budham laughed.

To follow her passion, Kristina joined AileyCamp Miami, an annual summer camp presented the past nine years by Adrienne Arsht Center.

Kristina is Ailey's first camper with Down syndrome.

Her mother saw a program flier and knew they had to try. Other programs were too expensive, she said, or didn't coordinate with her work schedule.

"I wrote the director. I was asking different things about the camp, but what I was really asking was if they accept kids with disabilities," Budham said.

And they did. Out of more than 300 applicants, Kristina was selected to dance. She and 104 other campers would become their own company, learning to rely on each other and put on a full scale production, said Jairo Ontiveros, director of education at the Arsht Center, where the camp takes place.

The finale is Saturday night at the Arsht Center, where the campers will put on a show with their very own set design team, sound designer and more.

At AileyCamp, kids ages 11-14 learn to dance from experienced teaching artists in popular styles such as West African, jazz and ballet. The six-week program uses workshops to build their confidence and promote personal and creative development.



"I think programs tend to get scared because the child is different or has a disability. It's our job to address the person first and keep pushing ourselves to understand what inclusivity means," Ontiveros said.

This year's theme is unity. Using dance and spoken word, campers at Saturday's performance will express what unity means to them in their lives and community.

"The program is not to find the next great dancer, but using the art of dance to shape and mold these young talented minds," Ontiveros said.

Now when Kristina comes home, she has new dance moves to show her mom. Sometimes West African dance steps. Sometimes, jazz hands.

"She wants to be accepted. She's just like another kid. When she's with her sister, she's like, 'Oh, she's the bright one.' She picks up on the fact her sister would know what to do and say in a certain situation when maybe she wouldn't. And maybe that's why she's a little shy. I think the dance is really bringing her out of her shell," Budham said.



With her counselor, Dallas Rivers, Kristina is not shy at all. The two sat together for lunch. Rivers, a Miami-Dade Schools' guidance counselor for Students in Special Education, danced in her seat as Kristina ate quietly.

"Work, work, work, work, work," Rivers sang, swaying with the the lyrics to Kristina's favorite song.

Without looking up from her meatball sub, Kristina put her hand on her counselor's arm.

"Don't embarrass me," she said playfully.

"Well, if you don't do the dance I'll just have to keep singing" she replied.

The relationship with Rivers is just one of many bonds Kristina has formed in the camp. She's also close to friend Brianna Rondon, 13, who said the camp has taught her how to feel confident and better treat others.

"I'm not scared anymore to dance in front of people," she said.

AileyCamp was the first time she ever wore a leotard. Besides helping youth develop their self-confidence in a positive atmosphere, the program also provides everything from transportation to backpacks to food.

"[Kristina's] a joy to work with and she's made some great friends," Ontiveros said.

"And yes it may take her a little longer to catch up to a move, but she still strives for being a team member. She's not giving up, and she's not the type to give up."



## AILEY CAMP FINALE

- **Where:** Knight Concert Hall, Adrienne Arsht Center, 1300 Biscayne Blvd., Miami
- **When:** Standby line forms at 6 p.m. Saturday
- **Tickets:** Admission is free and on a first-come, first-served basis based upon seat availability

Watch the video here: <http://www.miamiherald.com/entertainment/performing-arts/article165435262.html>



JESSICA CAMPISI [jcampisi@mcclatchy.com](mailto:jcampisi@mcclatchy.com)

Janasia Johnson, 14, and Jairo Ontiveros, the Arsht Center Arts education director, display the 2016 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award after meeting first lady Michelle Obama at the White House.

## THE ARTS

# Teenager accepts award at White House for AileyCamp Miami

■ Janasia Johnson, 14, visited the White House and met first lady Michelle Obama on Tuesday on behalf of AileyCamp Miami, a program that works with local middle schoolers and which received a national award for its work.

BY JESSICA CAMPISI  
[jcampisi@mcclatchy.com](mailto:jcampisi@mcclatchy.com)

## WASHINGTON

While other kids her age were learning new vocabulary words and basic math skills, Janasia Johnson was learning how to live without her mother.

At age 8, Janasia's mother was convicted of second-degree murder and sent to prison, leaving the now-14-year-old to live with her three siblings, grandmother, aunt and two cousins.

"I grew up without a dad, and my mother was incarcerated; I didn't know how to express myself," Johnson said. "I was always

angry."

Last summer, Johnson attended AileyCamp Miami, a six-week summer program that works with middle school students, teaching them to express themselves through dance, writing and the arts rather than verbal altercations. The camp, now in its eighth year, is run by the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater—

SEE AWARD, 6A

## FROM PAGE 1A

# AWARD

headed by Liberty City native Robert Battle.

Johnson represented AileyCamp at the White House on Tuesday as the organization received the 2016 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award, along with 11 other programs nationwide. First lady Michelle Obama congratulated Johnson, an eighth grader from North Miami Beach.

"We believe every single child has boundless promise, no matter who they are, where they come from

or how much money their parents have," Obama said. "These kids represent the very best of America."

Being honored at the ceremony and meeting Obama was very exciting, Johnson said, adding she hopes to be as "open-hearted" as the first lady.

"It was very exciting; it showed me that there's more out there," Johnson said. "I can be anyone I want to be."

Obama praised the youth program leaders for giving students a chance to succeed, even though many kids "think that places like this are not for them."

"Through our programs, students have become poets and dancers and filmmakers and photographers, but more importantly, they've become leaders in their communities," Obama said. "Together, they've learned the power of discipline, of hard work and teamwork."

At AileyCamp, students learn about West African drumming, jazz, modern and ballet dancing, while taking classes in conflict resolution, drug prevention, creative communication and other areas of personal development.

Johnson has used a specific creative outlet — poetry — since she was 8 to express her feelings. In particular, there's one quote, which came from author Robert Tew, which she said she'd always remember:

"Don't let negative and toxic people rent a space in your mind," she said. "Raise the rent and kick them out."



July 19, 2012

UPTOWN NEWS

# LIFTING THE BAR

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## Ailey dancers teach city kids the moves

BY MICHAEL J. FEENEY  
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

FOR SIX WEEKS this summer, more than 100 city kids will learn dance techniques in Washington Heights from some of the best trained dancers in the country.

AileyCamp, a program of the world-famous Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, kicked off last week, transforming IS 90 into a dancer's playground.

Jaleen Henderson, 12, of East Harlem, said she has been dancing since she was 3 and knows exactly what she wants to do.

"I want to be a contemporary dancer," said Henderson, who's in her second year at the free camp and describes herself as a "street dancer" who had little formal training before coming to AileyCamp.

"It's fun and educational," she told the Daily News. "AileyCamp is not like the other camps. I tell all my friends to come here."

The 112 campers — including 17 boys — are learning ballet as well as modern, jazz and West African dance through the program, which is taking place in 10 cities across the country this summer.

"High necks, long necks and smile a little bit," one instructor

called out during ballet class.

In addition to executing dance moves, the campers have sessions in which they discuss everything from conflict resolution to nutrition.

During a visit to the camp on Tuesday, the boys played the drums, the girls displayed their *pas de bourrée* in ballet and showed off jazz and modern dance routines.

The campers also recited affirmations such as: "I will not use the word 'can't' to define my possibilities."

Jacqueline Martinez, 11, of Washington Heights, wasn't sure she'd be able to learn all of the dances. But she credited her instructors with making it easy.

"They teach you step by step," said Martinez, who started dancing when she was 8. "I like it because you get to follow your dreams."

Not everyone wants to be a dancer, of course; and that's okay, said Nasha Thomas-Schmitt, the national director of the camp.

"It's a program for inner-city kids who have not had access to the arts," she said of the camp, which partners with the Children's Aid Society.

"They can express themselves. They can be themselves. It's about building self-esteem." mfeeney@nydailynews.com

Students are in sync (top & above) during and in joyous mood (r.) following AileyCamp class at Intermediate School 90 on W. 168th St. in Washington Heights Tuesday. They're learning ballet, jazz, modern and West African dances. Photos by David Handschuh/Daily News



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## Alvin Ailey's Mission Inspires Dance Camp

By TAMMY LA GORCE

**W**HEN Nehprie Amenii of Brooklyn walked into Newark Arts High School for the first time this summer, she was prepared to be hit with what she called "full cannons of attitude."

Since then, she has been spending weekdays teaching creative communication to 11- to 14-year-olds as part of AileyCamp, a full-day summer program offered by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and financed, in Newark, entirely by the Prudential Foundation.

Two weeks into the camp, Ms. Amenii, 31, recalled, "I used humor" to counteract uncooperative attitudes. "Then all that hardness starts to fall off," she said, and the camp's mission, which is not just to teach dance but also to help

**Newark youths, some with hard lives, get cultural training.**

campers navigate adolescence, can take center stage.

The camp is free to its 96 participants, who were selected after personal interviews this spring from a pool of 250 candidates in Newark public schools. It will end Aug. 12 after a performance on Aug. 10 at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark, intended mainly for campers' friends and families.

AileyCamp is new to Newark and to New Jersey. The program was introduced in 1989 in Kansas City, Mo., by the dance company in partnership with the Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey. By 1999, when Nasha Thomas-Schmitt of Maplewood became director of Ailey's Arts in Education program as well as national director of AileyCamp, it had spread to Manhattan, Chicago and Bridgeport, Conn. During Ms. Thomas-Schmitt's tenure, camps have been added in Atlanta; Kansas City, Kan.; Berkeley, Calif.; Boston; Chicago; Miami; and now Newark.

"This program is my baby," Ms. Thomas-Schmitt, 48, a former Alvin Ailey dancer, said during a news media tour of the camp in mid-July. "When we open a camp, we're looking for a part-

ner that can sustain us. Hopefully this is staying in Newark for a long time."

Stops along the way in the bustling high school, which was hosting two other summer programs for children at the time, included classes in ballet, jazz, modern dance, West African dance, percussion and personal development.

Seven instructors — all but one have experience teaching other Ailey Arts in Education programs — lead the classes. In West African dance, children traversed the dance floor flailing their arms and stamping their feet to live accompaniment on a djembe drum; in ballet, a pianist played through a series of ports de bras and leaps.

Not only did AileyCamp Newark get financial support from the Prudential Foundation, but it also received help from the high school, which donated its dance-ready spaces and classrooms, and from the performing arts center, which is providing its 514-seat Victoria Theater for the performance.

Despite the absence of professional dancers, that performance is likely to have plenty of Ailey flavor.

"One of the first things we did here is show the kids Ailey history," said Felicia Swoope, 42, of Brooklyn, the director of the Newark camp. "We showed them videos of Ailey performing and explained the reason why he created the company."

Alvin Ailey, who died in 1989, founded his troupe in 1958 to promote African-American cultural expression and American modern dance. AileyCamp welcomes children of all races.

Though dance experience is not a prerequisite for campers, several children applied to the program because of their interest in becoming professional dancers. By the end of camp, as many as a dozen may receive scholarships to dance with Ailey's Junior Division at the Ailey School this fall.

As for the camp, Ms. Swoope said there were no "real criteria for getting in."

"What we want them to understand most is that Ailey was a remarkable person, but he was also a person just like them," she said. "He created work from his own experience, and we encourage them to do that also."

That may be more of a challenge in Newark than at the other AileyCamp sites, Ms. Thomas-Schmitt said. Though it is the camp closest to her home in Maplewood, and the easiest for her to visit, "I was a little nervous when we started

here," she said.

As Ailey's Arts in Education director, she has led several residencies in Newark's public schools. "I knew about the negative hardships a lot of these young people are dealing with on a daily basis," she said. "We don't have as many daunting situations in other camps." Those include incarcerated parents and drug-addicted ones, as well as unsafe

neighborhoods, she said.

"When we did our interviews for this camp," Ms. Thomas-Schmitt said, "one of our questions was, 'If you could change something in your life, what would it be?' Ninety percent said, 'Where I live.'"

By the end of camp, they may feel differently about that. As part of Ms. Amenii's creative communication class,



PHOTOGRAPHS BY FRED R. CONRAD/THE NEW YORK TIMES

**GRACE** Nasha Thomas-Schmitt, top right, national director of AileyCamp, in Newark. A student, left, reads her poem in creative communications class.



campers are taking pictures of their neighborhoods and writing poems about them; the poems will accompany a show of the photographs as part of the performance.

"When I think about them getting up on that stage, how important it makes them feel, it makes me teary-eyed," Ms. Amenii said. "It will be one of the biggest moments of their lives."

By mid-July, some campers were already showing signs that the camp had been an enriching experience. "What they want us to remember is that all kids can dance, and no one is special or more important than anyone else," said Briana Thomas, an 11-year-old from Newark who will enter Newark Early College High School as a sixth-grader in the fall. "I used to catch an attitude, but not so much anymore. It takes two to argue, and I have to think about being responsible for myself."

"I learned that from AileyCamp," she said.