



Dancer Spotlight: Hannah Alissa Richardson Of AILEY II Performing at The Ailey Citigroup Theater 3/23 to 4/3

By: Marina Kennedy
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First-year [Ailey II](#) member Hannah Alissa Richardson will join, the celebrated second company to [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater](#), as they return to their home, The Ailey Citigroup Theater, for a highly anticipated two-week season featuring 10 performances from March 23 to April 3. In the first New York Season led by Artistic Director [Francesca Harper](#), the gifted 12-member ensemble will showcase their artistry in three programs featuring premieres and returning favorites: *Dichotomous*, *New Lens* and *Pulse*, as well as the special celebrating [Robert Battle](#)'s 10th anniversary program paying homage to his visionary leadership and Ailey journey, which began in 1999 choreographing *Mood Indigo* for the second company. Broadwayworld had the pleasure of interviewing Hannah Alissa Richardson about her career and the upcoming performances by Ailey II.

Richardson graduated with honors from The Ailey School Certificate Program. She has traveled coast to coast participating in workshops and competitions taking home top overall awards and scholarships. Ms. Richardson has performed works by choreographers including Ray Mercer, Bradley Shelver, Kirven Douthit-Boyd, Earl Mosley, William Forsythe, and Robert Battle. She has been a featured dancer in festivals such as Bard Summerscape and the Holland Dance Festival. Some of her film and television credits include Orion Pictures' *Every Day* and Disney Channel's *Backstage*. Ms. Richardson is also a guest artist for Ronald K. Brown's Evidence, A Dance Company. This is her first season with Ailey II. Instagram: @hannahxrichardson

Who was the very first person to recognize your dancing talents?

The first to recognize my joy of dance and movement were definitely my parents and I thank them every day for putting me in dance because it led me to where I am today. My first dance teacher Miss Theresa who taught me an intro to dance tap and ballet combo class at age 2 ½ was the one who identified my potential to Ms. Ginette Guimond, the studio director. Ms. Guimond furthered my training and guided me through my early years of dance until age 18.

Where did you begin your dance training?

I began my dance training at Maple Academy of Dance in Vaughan, Ontario Canada, under the direction of Ginette Guimond. I also trained with various choreographers and teachers gaining as much experience and exposure in all genres. This path and dedication led me to the prestigious Ailey School, graduating with honors from the Certificate Program and here I am today as a member of Ailey II.

Is there a particular dancer or theatre professional who has inspired your career?

There have been multiple artists who continue to amaze me throughout my career, and depending on what I need at the moment, I draw onto them and receive it and move forward. However, I find the people that surround me, inspire me the most. Being in the same studio and creative space as my dance mates and experiencing firsthand our growth and hard work is what inspires me day in and day out. At any given time, we have at least 12 unique lives interpreting a piece coming from different backgrounds, diversities, and paths that lead us to this moment on stage. The talent, perseverance, and passion put forth by my fellow dancers inspire me to push beyond myself.

We'd love to know a little about your professional training and how it has prepared you for current performances.

My professional training has been rooted at the Ailey School's three-year Certification Program. The program was based on ballet, jazz, modern based Horton, Graham, and a variety of minor studies. It was very in-depth, rigorous, and demanding. Certainly, prepared and balanced me for professional work. I also received training from Ronald K. Brown, artistic director of Evidence, A Dance Company.

When you reflect on your dance opportunities, is there a moment in time that returns to your memories?

This is a tough one, I've been blessed to have so many opportunities in my dance career. I think receiving the acceptance to the Ailey School that catapulted my dance life here in New York, would be one of my greatest moments. Then after that, would be each and every time I set foot on stage to perform.

Can you share some of the challenges of being a professional dancer?

Like most other professions there comes many challenges, however, in the professional dance world that challenge is always apparent. From rejection to successful auditions to endless long rehearsals and touring, if you are lucky enough, challenges your body, mind, and soul. You are constantly pushing your limits and then moving the goal post for yourself at each and every junction. For me, as an international dancer, missing family and friends, events, celebrations, and their milestones is difficult. As someone who has been visualizing, manifesting, and working very hard for this dance life thus far being an Ailey II member is a great achievement. And with the support of your family and friends and their understanding the stars are the limit.

What piece of advice do you have for aspiring dancers?

I think young dancers should love all aspects of dance. Being celebrated on stage comes from working hard, being diligent, appreciating your surroundings, and the people that got you there. Surround yourself with good people that you can learn from and who will support you.

We are excited about your company's upcoming performances. How does it feel to be back on the stage?

I am very excited to be back performing in NYC. It's a perfect homecoming from a long absence. The world is awakening. Being on stage with a live audience will be exhilarating. To perform incredible works from such talented choreographers like Andrea Miller, Robert Battle, Yannick Lebrun, and William Forsythe to name a few will be truly remarkable. And to be able to do it for those who have had a hand in my growth as a dancer and person will be so rewarding for me. I am so thankful for my Ailey Family and very thankful for this moment.

Tell us a little about the season ahead for your company.

We have just completed our West Coast tour and are very excited to be back performing in New York City. We've learned works by William Forsythe and a wonderful new company premiere, *Freedom Series*, choreographed by our very own Francesca Harper with an incredible array of artists lending to the music. We will also be performing many works by the one and only Robert Battle. We have enjoyed working hard together to bring this special season on stage.

Can you share with us any of your future plans?

My future plans are to continue to work on my craft. To learn from greatness, choreographers, teachers, and mentors. Continue to grow. Celebrate my loved ones. And hopefully find opportunities that lead me to where I am most happy, on stage.

To purchase tickets for Ailey II at The Ailey Citigroup Theater and to learn more about the company, please visit Visit www.alvinailey.org/about/ailey-ii. To enjoy a variety of digital content, follow Ailey II on Facebook and Instagram.