



The Ailey Spirit Gala 2023

By: Yvonna Russell

May 25, 2023



You gotta realize that there ain't no party like The Ailey Spirit Gala! For the first time The Ailey Spirit Gala was held at the beautiful Jazz at Lincoln Center on the evening of May 24th in Manhattan. The spectacular one night only benefit was a celebration of the art and soul of dance to benefit Ailey's uplifting programs for young people including scholarships for talented students of The Ailey School and Arts In Education & Community Programs.

The world renowned Ailey organization has grown significantly since Alvin Ailey and a group of young, Black modern dancers performed for the first time at New York's 92nd Street Y in 1958. [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater](#) has performed for an estimated 25 million people in 71 countries

on six continents, promoting the uniqueness of the African American cultural experience and the preservation and enrichment of the American modern dance tradition. Beautiful people from the worlds of entertainment, business, philanthropy and politics including Jillian Hervey (Lion Babe), Damaris Lewis, Karen Pittman and Robin Roberts joined Artistic Director Robert Battle, Ailey Trustee Dr. Danielle Robinson and the Reverend Dwayne McClary and Ailey Board Chair Daria L. Wallach and Eric J. Wallach for champagne and red carpet photos in The Appel Room before the program in The Rose Theater.

"The Ailey Spirit Gala is the one time of the year when the beating heart of everything Ailey joins in celebration and moves together with love," said Robert Battle, Artistic Director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. First the one-night-only Ailey American Dance Theater program kicked off with drummers from Djoutalla and the Ailey Extension students in a dance and drum demonstration led by Ailey instructor Maguette Camara. Ailey Board Chairwoman Daria Wallach introduced the piece de occasion. Former Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater dancer Hope Boykin premiered her choreography in *Chasing The Spirit*, a multigenerational Ailey family performance in a tribute to the power of dance to unite, uplift, and inspire.

Honorary Chair for the evening GRAMMY® Award-winning singer-songwriter and Golden Globe-winning actress for her feature-acting debut in the biopic "The United States vs. Billie Holiday", Andra Day took time from her busy schedule to grace the gala. Audra is currently working on her second studio album while preparing for the upcoming release of her Netflix thriller, "The Deliverance". Audra introduced The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater performance.

Ailey American Dance Theater took the audience to church with excerpts from 'Revelations'. *Take me to the Water* and *Move, Members, Move* had everyone on their feet for standing ovations. Alvin Ailey's most iconic ballet, 'Revelations' premiered in 1960. African American spirituals, song-sermons, gospel songs, and holy blues, 'Revelations' fervently explores the places of deepest grief and holiest joy within the soul. The magic continues at Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) presents Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's New York City season from June 6–11.

Outside was raining but ensconced within a stunning wall of glass with views of Central Park and the Manhattan skyline, the elegant after party was an open bar with specialty cocktails and bites of lobster rolls, mini sliders, beef tenderloin with risotto, spicy pork bao, butterfly shrimp and Thai lettuce cups. Dessert was three tiers of sweets.

The Appel Room was a sexy candlelight lounge serenaded by the music stylings of DJ M.O.S. Yes of course there was sensational dancing. "For this unique celebration, we applaud all the dancers involved from across the entire Ailey organization who showed us so beautifully the importance of passing forward the spirit of dance" stated Bennett Rink, Executive Director of Ailey. *The Ailey Spirit Gala* was the soulful soiree benefit party of Spring 2023. The fabulous evening sponsored by Diageo North America raised funds for The Ailey School and Arts In Education & Community Programs, outreach programs — including a signature fully-funded summer camp for preteens — and even Ailey Extension, where people of all ages can drop in for movement classes.

