

## [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Makes Triumphant Return to BAM for Limited Engagement](#)

June 6, 2023



The world-renowned dance troupe will perform two programs at BAM — one featuring the seminal works of Alvin Ailey himself, and the other featuring a distinctly Brooklyn mix of rare and recent works.

The [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater](#) six-day series at the [Brooklyn Academy of Music](#) is going to feel like a homecoming.

Maybe it's because of the Brooklyn-themed program. Perhaps it's because BAM is where Ailey first performed as a dancer in 1956, two years before he founded his paradigm-shifting dance company.



It might be because some of the past and current dancers grew up here. Or, maybe it's that Brooklyn and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater are both rooted in culture, creativity and kinetic energy.

Regardless of the reason, the series, which takes place June 6-11, is going to feel like a sacred, distinctly Brooklyn reunion.

"It's just an overwhelming feeling, to perform with Alvin Ailey in Brooklyn," Ailey dancer [Jeroboam Bozeman](#), of Bed-Stuy, said. Bozeman has been performing with the company for 10 years and credits his love of dance to growing up in Brooklyn and dancing at block parties.

"There's an underlying pressure from Brooklyn — you come home and it's like, 'All right now, you better show us!' you know? So that's a little bit how I feel, but I am just so excited."

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is an iconic institution in the world of modern dance, known for its performances that transcend cultural boundaries, tell stories and provoke profound reflections on identity and social issues. The company was started in 1958 in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement and quickly gained international acclaim for its piece, "Revelations," which explores African American cultural heritage and spirituality.

Ailey dancer Jacquelin Harris said during the upcoming performances at BAM, she wants the audience to absorb the hope, unity and resilience explored on stage.

"We are giving our whole hearts and spirit and enjoying each other's space and time, so I hope the audience takes that with them," Harris said. She has been at Ailey for nine years.

The dance company will perform two programs at BAM. One program, called "Brooklyn Bonds," will feature fresh takes on three rarely performed pieces by choreographers Ronald K. Brown, Twyla Tharp and Kyle Abraham. The second program, "All Ailey," will feature four seminal works choreographed by Ailey himself.

### Brooklyn Bonds

In Brooklyn Bonds, the dance troupe will perform three dances: "Dancing Spirit" by Ronald K. Brown, "Roy's Joys" by Twyla Tharp and "Are You in Your Feelings?" by Kyle Abraham.

Brown's "Dancing Spirit" is an homage to the intrepid Judith Jamison, the artistic director emerita of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. She's famous for her evocative choreography, for leading the dance troupe after Ailey's death and for debuting Ailey's 16-minute solo, "Cry," which is dedicated to Black mothers. In *Roy's Joys*, the company showcases Tharp's work, who is known for her



technically brilliant choreography and playful tone. The smoldering piece — set to the music of legendary New York jazz trumpeter Roy Eldridge — was created in 1997 and hasn't premiered since then, Harris said.

"It's about taking the music and making it new again," Harris said.

The last piece of the "Brooklyn Bound" program, Bozeman said, is sure to be a crowd pleaser. "Are You in Your Feelings?" is a new work by Abraham that celebrates the youthful spirit of Black culture through iconic music from different decades.

"So many different people can connect to it — it's one that the audience will really feel as though they are seeing themselves," Bozeman said. "Every time we perform it, we have audience members singing the songs."

"It's very 'For us, by us,' very 'For the culture.' I'm so excited to share that with a Brooklyn audience," Harris told *BK Reader*.

### All Ailey

The "All Ailey" set list includes four works by the icon himself that showcase the expansive ingenuity of Ailey's repertoire. "Night Creature," which Ailey choreographed in 1975, is a sparkling homage to nightlife to the music of Duke Ellington. "Cry," which he choreographed in 1971, was a birthday gift for his mother, Lula Cooper.

The intense, emotional 16-minute solo is an impressive physical feat dedicated to Black mothers. *Survivors*, which he choreographed in 1986 with Mary Barnett, tells the story of Nelson and Winnie Mandela, set to the jazz of Max Roach and Abbey Lincoln.

Though "*Survivors*" is about Apartheid South Africa, Bozeman said the ballet's themes echo today's social climate. "Performing '*Survivors*' is paying homage — not only to Nelson Mandela — but to all of our ancestors who have paved the way so that we can create change," said Bozeman, who will portray Nelson in the piece.

"When I think of different stories of police brutality and the injustice is that we, as Black and Brown people, face in the world and navigate in America, having a ballet like '*Survivors*,' is incredibly fitting."



Last but not least, the dance company will perform "*Revelations*," the iconic work exploring grief, joy and spirituality through the African American traditions of gospel, spirituals and blues. "*Revelations*," which debuted in 1960, is inspired by Ailey's upbringing in the Baptist church.

"I grew up in the South, I grew up in the Baptist church and so for me, the first time seeing '*Revelations*' as a young adult, it felt like it was the first time I saw my experiences, my spirituality represented on the main stage by these superhero dancers who are so gorgeous and so sexy and so impassioned doing this type of work," Harris said.

"It feels like an honor to be able to carry on that legacy and be that representation for younger generations." "It's not just African American culture and history — it's American history as well," Bozeman said. "We are a part of this huge nucleus, this big thing that weaves life into the world and I am just grateful that I'm just a small part."

For tickets and the performance schedule, [click here](#).