

AILEY[®]

ARTS IN EDUCATION
& COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

STUDY GUIDE

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater School-Day Performance

Wednesday, March 1, 2023, 11 AM-12 PM

Recommended for students in grades 4-8



MOSS
ARTS
CENTER

A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“Dance came from the people and must always be delivered back to the people.” - Alvin Ailey

Dear Educator,

For over sixty years, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has carried out the credo of its founder through performances, school and community programs, professional training of young dancers, classes for the public, and more. To Mr. Ailey, dance was more than a series of steps; it was a means of expressing emotion, of telling one’s story, of honoring the past and rejoicing in what is to come. In fulfillment of his legacy, we strive to offer abundant opportunities for young people to experience the possibilities of dance, no matter who they are or where they come from.

We hope the exercises and activities suggested in this resource guide will provide you and your students with a creative and interactive inlet to the world of dance and the work of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, or help you prepare them to attend a dance performance.

By bringing your students to an Ailey performance, participating in an Ailey Arts In Education residency, or simply sharing with them the joy and practice of dance, you are engaging the next generation in the Ailey legacy; one expressly dedicated to expanding the minds, talents, and dreams of young people. Thank you for your contribution, and enjoy!

Sincerely,



**Bennett Rink
Executive Director, Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation**

WE WANT EVERYONE TO ENJOY THE SHOW

Please prepare your students for their visit to the Moss Arts Center by practicing audience etiquette before you attend a live performance. The following guidelines will ensure that everyone can enjoy the show:

- Turn off your cell phone and any other device that creates light or could make noise and distract others during the performance.
- Photography, audio, or video recording is not allowed inside the theatre.
- Food, gum, and beverages are not allowed inside the theatre.
- Keep the aisles clear at all times and stay seated so that those behind you can also see the stage.
- You can show appreciation and enthusiasm for the performance by paying attention and clapping at the proper time.
- Participate if invited to do so by the performers, but save personal conversations for after the show.



The content and suggested activities in this guide can be integrated into an established school curriculum. Through residency classes, attendance at a performance, pre- and post-performance guided discussion, and critical writing, students will develop their aesthetic awareness and enter into the process of response, critique, and dance-making. The guide includes detailed hands-on activities involving the creation of artwork through the use of shape, ensemble, emotion, response to music, and choreographic patterns. Drawing and movement exercises and activities involving the body as a sculptural shape invite students to experience the creative process and decision-making both individually and in collaboration with others. Discussion questions, research suggestions, and background materials in the guide (e.g., the role of movement in various cultures, African-American influences in dance, biographies of prominent artists of color, and the impact of racism on dance) encourage an understanding of cultural, political, and social contributions to the arts. Students will begin to understand that dance and the arts at large are a reflection of the era and culture in which they were created.

The resource guide is designed to:

- Extend the impact of a residency or performance by providing discussion ideas, activities, and suggested reading that promote learning across the curriculum
- Familiarize students with the history, legacy, and artistry of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater
- Maximize students' enjoyment and appreciation of dance
- Promote arts literacy by expanding students' knowledge of dance
- Illustrate that the arts reflect the traditional values, customs, beliefs, and expressions of a culture
- Celebrate students' own heritage through self-expression

FOR TEACHERS

Classroom Activities

1. Mirroring: To explore the concept of working as an ensemble, try a simple “mirroring” exercise. Ask students to find a partner. Designate one person in each pair as the leader and the other as the “mirror reflection.” As the “leader” in each pair moves (limit movement choices to the hands, arms, head and upper back), the “mirror” acts as the leader’s reflection, following the leader exactly. Very slow, smooth movement helps the mirror to stay precisely with the leader. Trade places so that the leader becomes the mirror and vice versa. Slow, sustained accompanying music helps the students focus. If the exercise is done well, it is impossible to see which person is leading. An excellent exercise for developing concentration, mirroring also helps students understand the nonverbal sensitivity dancers need in order to work on stage with other people.

Virginia Theatre Arts Standards of Learning: 5.5, 7.5, 8.5

Virginia Dance Standards of Learning: 4.1, 4.5, 4.12, 4.13, 4.14, 4.15, 4.16, 5.1, 5.12, 5.13, 5.14, 5.15, 5.16, 6.1, 6.13, 7.1, 7.13, 8.1, 8.13

2. Translating Everyday Movement to Dance: Much of dance movement onstage comes from everyday movement. This real life movement is often transformed or exaggerated as it becomes dance movement. This transformation produces stylized movement which is recognizable, yet different. Trying this process of stylizing movement will help the students understand how the movements they do every day forms the basis for dance. Have the class pick a category of everyday movements, e.g., ways of saying “hello,” sports movements, getting-ready-in-the-morning movements. Choose a single movement from the category, such as waving “Hello.” Make the arm wave larger than usual so that it becomes an arc taking the whole body out in space. Next, try the arm wave in very slow motion. Finally, try the arm wave while doing a turn with the whole body. The arm wave has just become stylized like much dance movement. Discuss if you can still identify the movement as an arm wave. Also observe if the wave takes on a new or different look from its original form. Select another movement, e.g., a handshake or a football toss. Stylize the movement in the same three ways as above; large, slowly, and turning. Alert students to spotting examples of everyday movements in the dance performance. Follow up with “After the Performance” Activity 4.

Virginia Dance Standards of Learning: 4.12, 4.13, 4.14, 4.15, 4.16, 5.1, 5.12, 5.13, 5.14, 5.15, 5.16, 6.13, 7.13, 8.13

3. Shapes: An important element of dance is the use of the body as a sculptural shape. Focus students’ perception on this idea by asking each one to bring in three pictures of a single body creating a shape. (Sports pages, news photos, and advertisements are good photo sources.) From the pictures,

make a sequence of three or four photos with variety within the sequence. Challenge students to make the shape in the photos with their bodies. Have a group of students make one shape, and then each shape sequentially. How can a group organize itself so everyone moves together? Does the sequence of shapes create a flow of movement, or are the transitions between shapes difficult? Are certain sequences especially satisfying? Why?

Virginia Dance Standards of Learning: 4.12, 5.12, 6.13, 7.13, 8.13

4. Connecting Music to Movement: Each of the dances of the Ailey repertory seems to have its own movement personality. An integral part of that personality is the music to which the dance is set. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater uses a wide range of music, from Caribbean folk music to contemporary classical music and from Duke Ellington orchestral arrangements to spoken words. Let the class discover how certain music inspires particular movement. Bring in three or four very different types of music, e.g., global music, classical music, popular music with lyrics, or “sound” backgrounds. Ask the students first to express the feeling of the music with crayons, markers or paints. Encourage them to let color, line and texture show the music, rather than

representational drawing. Next, ask the students to express the music with movement. Does the music inspire gentle or bold movements? Does it make the body travel in space or move in place? Does the music inspire smooth movements or sharp, angular ones? Discuss movement responses to the music. How are the responses related to the drawings? How do preconceived ideas about the music color responses to it?

Virginia Dance Standards of Learning: 4.1, 4.3, 4.18, 5.1, 5.6, 5.18, 6.1, 6.4, 6.6, 6.13, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.13, 8.1, 8.4, 8.6, 8.13, 8.15

Virginia Visual Arts Standards of Learning: 4.12, 4.17, 5.12, 5.17, 6.12, 7.12, 8.12, 8.17



Yazmeen Laidler. Photo by Danica Paulos

FOR TEACHERS

Before the Performance

Discussion

1. Movement is a language as rich and expressive as written or spoken language. Much of this movement language is understood by all humans around the world. Because we understand and use movement language so readily, we are often not conscious of the many ways in which we use it to communicate. Encourage the class to make a list of ways in which we use movement to communicate, e.g., expressing emotions, giving directions, accomplishing tasks, teaching, playing, worshipping, entertaining, or telling a story.

Virginia Dance Standards of Learning: 4.3, 5.6, 6.7, 7.7

2. Discuss the role dance plays in various cultures through social dances and folk dances. Ask students to describe or demonstrate social dances or folk dances that are traditional in their cultures. In which cultures does dance play an important role? Why?

Virginia Dance Standards of Learning: 4.6, 4.7, 5.6, 5.7, 6.6, 7.6, 7.7, 8.6, 8.7

3. Initiate an age-appropriate discussion about racism and breaking racial barriers to help students appreciate the groundbreaking work accomplished by Alvin Ailey. Like African-Americans in other fields, artists have struggled for opportunities to train and perform in their art forms. Mr. Ailey fortunately encountered a unique teacher, Lester Horton, who helped many dancers past the barriers that existed in the 1940s. Another Horton student of Ailey's era, Janet Collins, became the first African-American classical ballerina. Invited to join the famed Ballet Russes in the 1940s, Collins was asked to use body make-up to appear "white." She refused. Collins later joined the Metropolitan Opera Ballet. The recollections of artists of color provide a strong narrative about racial issues in the United States, past and present. Lead a discussion of these issues using Ailey's life as an example.

Virginia Dance Standards of Learning: 4.7, 5.7, 7.7, 8.6

Virginia History and Social Science Standards of Learning: USII.8, USII.9

After the Performance

Discussion

1. In discussing a dance performance, it is often more productive to ask the question, "What did you see in the dance?" or "What do you remember most strongly from the dance?" rather than "Did you like the dance?" The first two questions lead to observation or analysis of the performance, while the third question encourages judgmental responses. Although an audience should respond both positively and negatively to a dance, critique should come into play later in the discussion process. Discussion of what aspect of a dance stays mostly strongly in the memory often reveals the choreographic choices at the heart of the work. Have students describe a memorable moment from the dance in various ways—verbally, in writing, by drawing, or through movement. The Ailey performance can inspire a discussion about art and culture, especially for older students. Culture in this context represents the way of life of a group of people, including the customs, values, beliefs, stories, and artistic expressions. The Ailey company is considered a cultural export or cultural ambassador for the United States. How does art transmit culture? Can the students find examples of cultural elements in the dances? How do these cultural elements represent America? Would it be possible for any kind of art to have no cultural reference?

Virginia Dance Standards of Learning: 4.3, 4.4, 4.6, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 6.3, 6.4, 6.6, 7.3, 7.4, 7.6, 8.3, 8.4, 8.6



Chalvar Monteiro. Photo by Daniel Azoulay

Activities

1. The dancers expressed various feelings and emotions through their movements. Use this idea to explore the possibilities of physical communication. Refer back to using the body as a sculptural shape in “Before the Performance” Activity 3. Ask the students what feelings or emotions were expressed by the dancers. Have students recreate a movement or moment from one of the dances which shows an emotion or feeling. Using that emotion or another you suggest as a theme, ask the students to create an “art museum” filled with dramatic sculptures. Work in pairs with one person as the “artist” and the other as the “clay.” Artists should mold their clay, using the face as well as the whole body, into a frozen statue that expresses the theme emotion. While the clay holds the molded shape, ask each artist to step away from his or her statue. Observe the choices made by the artists. How are the statues similar? What does that reveal about how we physically express emotions? Have students trade places so that the artist becomes the clay and vice versa.

Virginia Dance Standards of Learning: 4.3, 4.12, 5.3, 5.12, 6.3, 6.4, 6.13, 7.3, 7.13, 8.3, 8.13

2. The Ailey performance offers opportunities for language arts activities. Have each student make a list of action words (verbs) and descriptive words (adjectives and adverbs) generated by the performance or a particular part of the performance. Emphasize the descriptive aspect of the words, e.g., verbs like bend, bounce, twist, melt, and explode, and adjectives like smooth, trembling, open, linear, and heavy. Create a list of verbs, adjectives, and adverbs contributed by the class. Discuss whether the list is highly varied or if many of the words are similar. What does this tell about the dances that inspired the words?

Virginia Dance Standards of Learning: 4.3, 5.3, 6.3, 7.3, 8.3

Virginia English Standards of Learning: 4.8, 5.8, 6.8, 7.8, 8.8

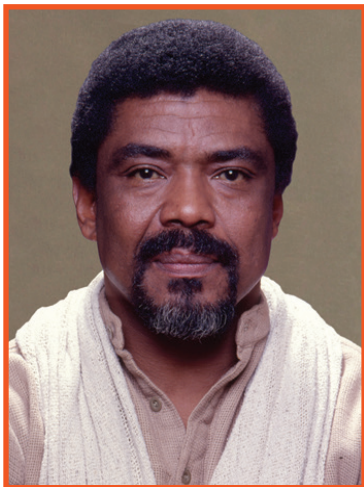
3. Ask students to write a review of the performance. First, consider two aspects of critical writing—description and opinion. An important function of a dance critic is the translation of movement images into written language. This translation is made by using descriptive language to paint a picture of what is seen onstage. Students will use this approach. Ask each to focus on the dance or section of a dance he or she remembers most vividly from the performance. Some questions the students could ask themselves might include: What was the form of the dance? Was it a solo, duet, or group dance? Was the dance highly organized and designed, or was it more casual with lots of things happening at once? How did the dance use energy? Was it mostly smooth and lyrical, light and fast, powerful and angular, or quirky and unpredictable? How was music or accompaniment used? What was the intention of the dance? Was it intended to tell a story, mood or emotion, or create patterns in time and space? After the descriptive phase of the review, students can write their responses to the dance. Opinions have a place in critical writing but need to be supported. Have students share their writing with each other and synthesize their work into one or more group reviews. Have them compare their writings to professional dance critics from publications such as *Dance Magazine*, *The New York Times*, *The Boston Herald*, *The L.A. Times*, and *The Chicago Tribune*.

Virginia Dance Standards of Learning: 4.3, 5.3, 5.4, 6.3, 6.4, 7.3, 7.4, 8.3, 8.4

4. The process of choreography is similar to written language—assembling words (movements) into sentences (phrases). Give the class the opportunity to make sentences in movement. Review the everyday movements listed by your students in “Before the Performance” Activity 2. Have the students demonstrate everyday movements they remember from the performance, e.g., a walk, hug, a nod, or a pointing finger. Have the class choose four movements that will serve as basic material for the students to use. Divide the class into small groups. Each group will work together as a single choreographer and use the four movements to create a movement sequence. All four movements must be used, but they may be placed in any order. One movement may be repeated at the beginning, middle, or end of the pattern. Each group can also choose its spatial formation; a line, circle, clump, wedge, or soloist with chorus are some possibilities. Have each group show its movement sequence to the rest of the class. Ask each group to describe its decision-making process.

Virginia Dance Standards of Learning: 4.1, 4.12, 4.14, 5.1, 5.12, 5.14, 6.2, 6.13, 7.2, 7.13, 8.1, 8.13

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER



ALVIN AILEY
FOUNDER

Alvin Ailey was born on January 5, 1931, in Rogers, Texas. His experiences of life in the rural South would later inspire some of his most memorable works. He was introduced to dance in Los Angeles by performances of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and the Katherine Dunham Dance Company, and his formal dance training began with an introduction to Lester Horton's classes by his friend Carmen de Lavallade. Horton, the founder of one of the first racially-integrated dance companies in the United States, became a mentor for Mr. Ailey as he embarked on his professional career. After Horton's death in 1953, Mr. Ailey became director of the Lester Horton Dance Theater and began to choreograph his own works. In the 1950s and 60s, Mr. Ailey performed in four Broadway shows, including *House of Flowers* and *Jamaica*. In 1958, he founded Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater to carry out his vision of a company dedicated to enriching the American modern dance heritage and preserving the uniqueness of the African-American cultural experience. He established the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center (now The Ailey School) in 1969 and formed the Alvin Ailey Repertory Ensemble (now Ailey II) in 1974. Mr. Ailey was a pioneer of programs promoting arts in education, particularly those benefiting underserved communities. Throughout his lifetime he was awarded numerous distinctions, including the Kennedy Center Honor in 1988 in recognition of his extraordinary contribution to American culture. In 2014, he posthumously received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the country's highest civilian honor, in recognition of his contributions and commitment to civil rights and dance in America. When Mr. Ailey died on December 1, 1989, *The New York Times* said of him, "you didn't need to have known [him] personally to have been touched by his humanity, enthusiasm, and exuberance and his courageous stand for multi-racial brotherhood."



ROBERT BATTLE
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Robert Battle became Artistic Director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in July 2011, making him only the third person to head the Company since it was founded in 1958. Mr. Battle has a long-standing association with the Ailey organization. A frequent choreographer and artist-in-residence at Ailey since 1999, he has set many of his works on Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and Ailey II, and at The Ailey School. Mr. Battle's journey to the top of the modern dance world began in the Liberty City neighborhood of Miami, Florida. He showed artistic talent early and studied dance at a high school arts magnet program before moving on to Miami's New World School of the Arts, under the direction of Daniel Lewis and Gerri Houlihan, and finally to the dance program at The Juilliard School, under the direction of Benjamin Harkavy, where he met his mentor Carolyn Adams. Mr. Battle danced with the Parsons Dance Company from 1994 to 2001, and also set his choreography on that company starting in 1998. He then founded his own Battleworks Dance Company, which made its premiere in 2002 in Düsseldorf, Germany as the U.S. representative to the World Dance Alliance's Global Assembly. Battleworks subsequently performed extensively at venues including The Joyce Theater, Dance Theater Workshop, American Dance Festival, and Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival. He has also created new works and restaged his ballets for such companies as Introdans, River North Chicago Dance Company, and Ballet Memphis. He has regularly conducted residencies at universities throughout the United States and gives master classes around the globe. Mr. Battle was honored as one of the "Masters of African-American Choreography" by the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in 2005, and he received the prestigious Statue Award from the Princess Grace Foundation-USA in 2007. In July 2010, he was a guest speaker at the United Nations Leaders Programme in Turin, Italy.

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER



MATTHEW RUSHING
ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Matthew Rushing was born in Los Angeles, California. He began his dance training with Kashmir Blake in Inglewood, California and later continued his training at the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts. He is the recipient of a Spotlight Award and Dance Magazine Award and was named a Presidential Scholar in the Arts. He was a scholarship student at The Ailey School and later became a member of Ailey II, where he danced for a year. During his career, Mr. Rushing has performed as a guest artist for galas in Vail, Colorado, as well as in Austria, Canada, France, Italy, and Russia. He has performed for Presidents George H. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama, as well as at the 2010 White House tribute to Judith Jamison. During his time with the Company, he has choreographed three ballets: *Acceptance In Surrender* (2005), a collaboration with Hope Boykin and Abdur-Rahim Jackson, *Uptown* (2009), a tribute to the Harlem Renaissance, and *ODETTA* (2014), a celebration of “The queen of American folk.” In 2012 he created *Moan*, which was set on Philadanco and premiered at The Joyce Theater. Mr. Rushing joined the Company in 1992 and became Rehearsal Director in June 2010. In January 2020, he succeeded Masazumi Chaya as Associate Artistic Director.



JUDITH JAMISON
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR EMERITA

Judith Jamison joined Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1965 and quickly became an international star. Over the next 15 years, Mr. Ailey created some of his most enduring roles for her, most notably the tour-de-force solo *Cry*. During the 1970s and 80s, she appeared as a guest artist with ballet companies all over the world, starred in the hit Broadway musical *Sophisticated Ladies*, and formed her own company, The Jamison Project. She returned to Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1989 when Mr. Ailey asked her to succeed him as Artistic Director. In the 21 years that followed, she brought the Company to unprecedented heights – including two historic engagements in South Africa and a 50-city global tour to celebrate the Company’s 50th anniversary. Ms. Jamison is the recipient of numerous awards and honors, among them a prime time Emmy Award, an American Choreography Award, the Kennedy Center Honor, a National Medal of Arts, a “Bessie” Award, the Phoenix Award, and the Handel Medallion. She was also listed in “The TIME 100: The World’s Most Influential People” and honored by First Lady Michelle Obama at the first White House Dance Series event. As a highly regarded choreographer, Ms. Jamison has created many celebrated works, including *Divining* (1984), *Forgotten Time* (1989), *Hymn* (1993), *HERE...NOW.* (commissioned for the 2002 Cultural Olympiad), *Love Stories* (with additional choreography by Robert Battle and Rennie Harris, 2004), and *Among US (Private Spaces: Public Places)* (2009). Ms. Jamison’s autobiography, *Dancing Spirit*, was edited by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and published in 1993. In 2004, under Ms. Jamison’s artistic directorship, her idea of “a bigger place,” the permanent home for the Ailey company, was realized and named after beloved chairman Joan Weill. Ms. Jamison continues to dedicate herself to asserting the prominence of the arts in our culture, and she remains committed to promoting the significance of the Ailey legacy – using dance as a medium for honoring the past, celebrating the present and fearlessly reaching into the future.

Contemporary African-American Choreographers

The Ailey company has been fertile ground for nurturing contemporary African-American choreographers. Some of them have produced their first works for the Company, while others have brought highly-developed styles to the Ailey repertory. The passion, political statements, and dazzling physicality of Bill T. Jones have made him one of the most important contemporary choreographers. Ronald K. Brown melds modern dance vocabulary with elements of African dance in a choreographic voice notable for its deep feeling. Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, with her strong commitment to creating a community of artists working within a neighborhood community, challenges the Ailey dancers to explore social issues and gender roles. Donald Byrd mixes classicism with a love of jazz to produce provocative choreographic statements. Camille A. Brown is a prolific choreographer, reclaiming the cultural narrative of African American identity through her works. Jamar Roberts, Ailey's first Resident Choreographer creates daring yet delicate depictions of the Black experience in America. These choreographers are providing the next chapter in the rich history of African-American contributions to American dance.



Samantha Figgins, Photo by Dario Calmese

Customs, Cultures, and Social Forces

The African-American influence on American dance has been enormous. Every aspect of dance, including social, Broadway theater, street, and modern dance, shows the impact of African-Americans past and present. This influence has its roots in West African dance and in the role of dance in African society.

Dance, particularly in West African communities, is a natural part of life. Every child attends ritual and recreational events, singing and dancing along with the community. The view of dance as a necessary, respected art is woven into the heritage of African-Americans. Even today, African dance in America educates, entertains, and expresses historical, cultural, and social ideologies.

African-American influences in social dance were felt in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in dances such as the Cake Walk, Charleston, and Lindy Hop. In addition, the development of jazz dance and tap by African-Americans paralleled the rise of jazz music and influenced American musical theater. During this time, racial barriers made it difficult for African-Americans to train or perform in more established dance forms, particularly classical ballet. In modern dance, America's indigenous dance, however, these barriers were not as pronounced. Some modern choreographers, including Ana Sokolow and Lester Horton, employed multi-racial casts of dancers. In fact, Horton trained the young African-American dancer Alvin Ailey, who would later become a major figure in American dance.

Ailey moved freely between modern dance and ballet in his choreography, making dances for major ballet companies in addition to those for his own company. He was also one of the first modern dance company directors to acquire a repertory, adding to his own dances the works of dance pioneers Lester Horton, Glen Tetley, Katherine Dunham, Donald McKayle, Pearl Primus, and Talley Beatty, among others. Ailey aspired to teach a mass audience through dance, and his work has greatly broadened the appeal of concert dance, drawing new dance audiences in large numbers. In 2008, a U.S. Congressional resolution designated the Company as "a vital American cultural ambassador to the world," one that celebrates the uniqueness of the African-American cultural experience and the preservation and enrichment of the American modern dance heritage. Today, the Company continues Mr. Ailey's mission by presenting important works of the past and commissioning new ones.

A few dance pioneers:



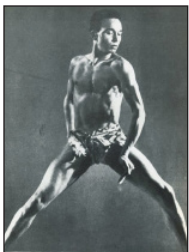
Lester Horton (1906–1953) was a West Coast choreographer and visionary teacher who served as Alvin Ailey's early teacher and mentor. Horton combined elements of Japanese theater, Native American ritual, and mythology with an earthy, powerful style of movement. His studio was open to dancers of all colors and ethnic backgrounds. His pupils also included the distinguished African American dancers Carmen de Lavallade and James Truitte.



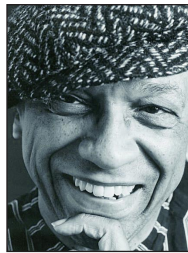
Katherine Dunham (1919–2006) was the first dancer/choreographer to organize a Black concert dance company and seriously explore African-American folklore. A noted anthropologist for her studies in the Caribbean and Haiti, Dunham was also a consummate theatrical artist. She organized her company in the late 1930s, when dance performance opportunities for artists of color were limited. Dunham's company performed throughout the United States and Europe with her highly successful blend of folk material, ballet, and modern dance. She choreographed for films and Broadway in the 1940s.



Dr. Pearl Primus (1919–1994), probably the finest American scholar of African dance, trained first as a modern dancer, then later in life earned her Ph.D. in Anthropology. She devoted her life to studying and performing the dances of Africa and, ironically, was asked by the governments of Ghana and Liberia to return to Africa to help preserve African culture. A spectacular dancer known for her jumps and percussive high energy, Primus is also remembered for her eloquent choreographic statements on race.



Talley Beatty (1923–1995), a veteran performer with Katherine Dunham's troupe, has had his choreography in the repertory of many companies. Some of his powerful dances, such as *The Road of the Phoebe Snow*, deal with issues of race, while others like *Congo Tango Palace* draw on rhythm and kinetic high energy. Several Beatty works have been performed by the Company, including *Stack-Up* and *Toccata*.



Donald McKayle (1930–2018), a student of Lester Horton, emerged as a gifted choreographer who has worked with modern dance companies, on Broadway, in television, and in theatrical revues. He has also received five Tony nominations for his Broadway choreography. Several of his works show his brilliant theatricality. *Games* is based on urban children's games, *Rainbow Round My Shoulder* depicts a prison chain gang, and *District Storyville* recreates the beginnings of jazz in New Orleans. McKayle's choreography is a staple of the Ailey repertory, and he choreographed for other major companies and productions. He was on the faculty at UC Irvine, Connecticut College, Sarah Lawrence, and Bennington College. He received an Honorary Ph.D. from the College of Arts and in 2009 he received an honorary Ph.D. from Juilliard in recognition of his contribution to dance.



Jack Cole (1911–1974) began his career with Denishawn (the school and company of Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis). His early training was in ballet and modern dance. Cole also studied India's *bharata Natyam* dance which influenced his personal jazz style, emphasizing isolations, quick directional changes, and long knee slides. He began performing in Broadway shows in 1933 and then went on to create choreography for Broadway, films, and television during the 1940s through the 1960s. Cole's choreography for Hollywood movie musicals remains as treasured artifacts of his creative output. He brought the syncopated rhythms of jazz music, the roots of tap dance, and the influence of his training in modern dance together to create a new form. Cole inspired many younger choreographers, including Alvin Ailey. Revered by dancers, the Cole legacy has been continued through the work of Bob Fosse, Gwen Verdon, Matt Mattox, and Michael Bennett. Alvin Ailey also valued Cole's work and was inspired to use the jazz dance style in many of his ballets.

The Basic Elements of Dance

body	The dancer's unique and distinctive instrument capable of grand and discrete movement in infinite combinations.
time	A measurable period during which movement or dance occurs. Dance makes the passage of time felt by dividing it into anything from complex, rhythmic patterns to long, unbroken stillness.
space	The whole design and use of the place in which a dance unfolds.
energy	The amount or force of the movement, also sometimes referred to as the color or texture of the movement.
Dance productions sometimes incorporate some of the following theatrical elements:	
scenery	The environment or setting of a dance, created through the use of, e.g., painted flats, painted backdrops, back curtains, lighting and/or slides on a cyclorama, a white screen-like curtain at the back of the stage.
props	Items used to create a sense of place, or items used by the dancers in the movements of the dance.
score	The musical or sound accompaniment for the dance, which may be created for the dance or may be preexisting music or sound.
stage lights	Electrical equipment used to illuminate the stage or an area of the stage or to suggest a mood or setting.
backstage	The area around and behind the stage where theater technicians work and dancers enter and exit the stage.
modern dance	A means of expression that is different from classical ballet; uses the body with a wider range of motion, the legs turned parallel or turned in; feet can be flexed and the back rounded; head is not always held erect; there are many different modern dance techniques.
Horton	Created by Lester Horton (1906–1953); a modern dance technique that explores how many different ways the body can move. He named these movements Studies. Some of the studies are for balance, some are to fortify (strengthen) and some are to work on the swinging action of the body. In the Horton technique, the dancer tries to use as much space as possible: turning, bending and jumping sideways, backward and even upside down. The shapes created are clear and linear. The quality of the movement is lyrical, powerful and energetic. The Horton technique portrays a dynamic beauty.
Graham-based modern	Created by Martha Graham (1894–1991); a dance technique that is based on the principle of contraction and release, movement which is similar to the act of breathing, creating a current of energy through the body; the back appears rounded in a contraction and the chest is lifted in a release; movement itself is dramatic and expressive.
ballet	A dance form which started in the royal courts of Europe; the body is held mostly upright and the legs are turned out from the hip; uses five basic positions of the feet; uses French as its language. The movement is meant to look elegant, effortless, and graceful all at once.

AILEY

ACTIVITIES!



Yannick Lebrun. Photo by Andrew Eccles

Directions: Alvin Ailey’s masterpiece ballet *Revelations* premiered in 1960. The work represents an important part of American culture. Think of words that you associate with *Revelations* and Alvin Ailey’s legacy. Write words that begin with each letter of the word “revelations.” Come up with as many words as possible for each letter. Begin the exercise by asking “What does Alvin Ailey mean to me?”

R [For Example] Regal, Refined, Raucous, Radiant, Raw, etc.

E

V

E

L

A

T

I

O

N

S

AILEY

ACTIVITIES!

For this activity you will create your own professional dance company, just like Alvin Ailey created the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1958. The company is part of Mr. Ailey's legacy. What will your legacy be?

Use the five questions below to describe your dance company.

1. What is the name of your dance company?

2. What is the mission of your company? (For example, Mr. Ailey's mission for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater was to make dance accessible because he believed that "dance came from the people and should always be delivered back to the people.")

3. What dance technique(s) does your dance company perform? (Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is a Modern dance company, specializing in Horton Technique.) Start by considering "what is your favorite dance technique?"

4. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has over 30 dancers in the company. How many dancers are in your company? Who would you like to dance in your company (friends, family members, classmates)?

5. When your company travels to perform, where do they go? Do they only travel within the United States, or all over the world like Mr. Ailey's company? Identify which continents, countries, and states your company will visit.

Dancing Deeper

Bibliography and Resources

Books for Students

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- Tracy, Robert. *Ailey Spirit: The Journey of an American Dance Company*. Stewart, Tabori and Chang, 2004.
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Videos, DVDs, and CDs

Available from AileyShop.com:

- Revelations* Audio CD. Entertainment One, 1999.
- Blues Suite* Audio CD. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, 2009.
- Lincoln Center at the Movies: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater* DVD. Directed by Matthew Diamond, 2016, 101 Minutes
- An Evening with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater* DVD. Directed by Thomas Grimm, 1986, 108 minutes.
- Beyond The Steps: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater* DVD. Dance Philm, produced and directed by Phil Bertelsen, 2006, 86 minutes.

Available from amazon.com:

- A Tribute To Alvin Ailey* DVD. RM Arts, 1997, 103 minutes.
-

Websites

www.AlvinAiley.org

Follow Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Ailey II, The Ailey School, and Ailey Extension on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube

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**ARTS IN EDUCATION
& COMMUNITY PROGRAMS**

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AlvinAiley.org

WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

CHANGING YOUR RESERVATION

If you cannot attend or your party turns out to be smaller than the number of tickets you have reserved, please inform the Moss Arts Center as soon as possible by contacting Shara Appanaitis at sappanaitis@vt.edu so that Moss staff can release your tickets to those on the waiting list.

ACCESSIBILITY

The Moss Arts Center is committed to being accessible to all of our patrons. Patrons with disabilities and their companions are accommodated through wheelchair seating, parking, and other special requests throughout the center at all levels. Assisted listening devices are available. Service animals are permitted. Sign interpretations and large-print programs are available with advance notification. If you or your students have questions regarding accessibility or would like assistance, please contact Jamie Wiggert at wiggertj@vt.edu.

DROP OFF

The bus drop-off location is on the Alumni Mall side of the Moss Arts Center, located at 190 Alumni Mall on the Virginia Tech campus. Drivers may pull their buses into the driveway loop directly in front of the center. Staff will be on site to assist. Recommended arrival time is 15-30 minutes before the start time of the performance.

PARKING FOR CARS AND VANS

Those driving cars and vans may park in the North End Center Garage (300 Turner Street NW), which is one block from the Moss Arts Center's Turner Street entrance. A valid university parking permit, a validation from one of the retail tenants, or payment of the daily fee is required to park in the North End Center Garage.

PARKING FOR BUSES

Bus staging is located in the upper section of the Chicken Hill lot (Football Lot 5) on the Virginia Tech campus. The lot entrance is on Southgate Drive, opposite Sterrett Drive. Parking passes will not be required for buses. For more information about parking at Virginia Tech, please visit parking.vt.edu. Please note that buses are not permitted to park adjacent to the Moss Arts Center's Turner Street entrance.

CHECKING IN

When you arrive at the center, please check in with Moss Arts Center staff to confirm that your party has arrived. Staff will be on site to assist seating your group, directing you to restrooms, and answering any questions you may have.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

In accordance with guidance from Virginia Tech, masks are no longer required in indoor public spaces, but remain recommended. The Moss Arts Center adheres to the guidelines of the Virginia Department of Health and Virginia Tech in its operations, including protocols for face coverings and cleaning and sanitation. Find more information about the university's policies [here](#).

We ask patrons to do their part in keeping our community healthy. If you feel unwell, please stay home.

WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

PICK UP

It is recommended that buses arrive back at the Moss Arts Center 15 minutes before the end of the performance. Following the performance, please remain in your seats; school groups will be dismissed by Moss Arts Center staff to ensure a smooth and speedy departure for all. Staff and volunteers will assist school groups in meeting their buses in the center's Alumni Mall driveway.

FEEDBACK

Following the performance, you may receive an email requesting feedback on your group's experience. Please make time to respond, as doing so could significantly improve the Moss Arts Center's pre-K to grade 12 programs for you and future visitors.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT MOSS ARTS CENTER PROGRAMS

Please subscribe to the [Moss Arts Center's email list](#) and join the list for school-day performances and K-12 programs.



MOSS ARTS CENTER

PERFORMANCES | EXHIBITIONS | EXPERIENCES

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