

# AILEY ARTS IN EDUCATION & COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

## RESOURCE GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS



# A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Educator,

For over 65 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 Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, or help you prepare them to attend a dance performance.

By bringing your students to a 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 young people's minds, talents, and dreams. Thank you for your contribution, and enjoy!

Sincerely,



Bennett Rink  
Executive Director, Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation

*"Dance came from the people and must always  
be delivered back to the people."*

—Alvin Ailey

# RESOURCE GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS



Photo by Nicole Tintile

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 reflections of the eras and cultures 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.

### 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 form 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.

### 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?

### 4. Connecting Music to Movement

Each of the dances in 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. ethnic 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?



# 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.

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?

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 Mr. Ailey’s life as an example.



# For Teachers

## 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 most 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?

### Cross-Curricular 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 that 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 or 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.

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?

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, evoke 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 Globe*, *The L.A. Times*, and *The Chicago Tribune*.

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.

# ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

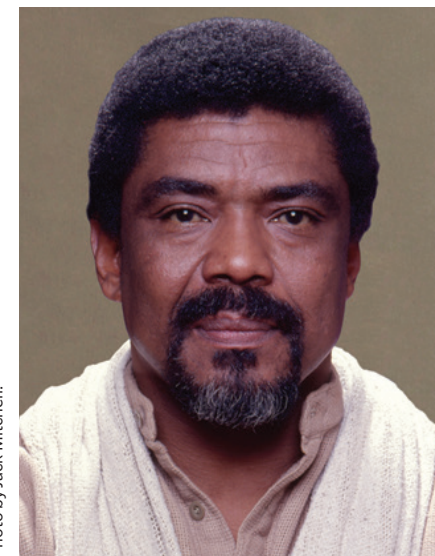


Photo by Jack Mitchell.

Alvin Ailey  
Founder



Photo by Andrew Eccles.

Alicia Graf Mack  
Artistic Director

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 uplifting the African American experience while enriching and preserving the legacy of modern dance. The creation

A former principal dancer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (2005-2008 and 2011-2014), she comes to AILEY from The Juilliard School, where she was the Dean and Director of the Dance Division for eight years (2018-2025). Born in San Jose, CA, Ms. Graf Mack grew up in Columbia, MD. She began her career with Dance Theatre of Harlem under the direction of Arthur Mitchell and ascended to become a highly recognized principal ballerina. A celebrated artist, she performed with Complexions Contemporary Ballet and made guest appearances with Alonzo King LINES Ballet. Her versatility led to collaborations with artists including Beyoncé, John Legend, Andre 3000, Alicia Keys, and Jon Batiste. Ms. Graf Mack has graced the stages of major galas and festivals, performed tributes to luminaries including Carmen de Lavallade at the 2017 Kennedy Center Honors, and danced at the memorial services for Arthur Mitchell at NYC’s Riverside Church and Jessye Norman

of his masterpiece *Revelations* in 1960 cemented his reputation as a choreographer of unique vision, with the ability to transcend racial barriers and connect deeply to people’s humanity. Mr. Ailey 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. He was also a pioneer of programs promoting arts in education. 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.”

at the Metropolitan Opera House. A Columbia University graduate (magna cum laude, honors in history), she also holds an MA in nonprofit management from Washington University in St. Louis. Her accolades include an honorary doctorate from The Juilliard School in 2025, *Smithsonian Magazine*’s American Innovator of the Arts and Sciences, Columbia University’s Medal of Excellence, and keynote addresses at Columbia’s School of General Studies in 2008 and 2025. She received the prestigious 2023 *Dance Magazine* Award and the 2025 Columbia Black Alumni Heritage Award. Before arriving at Juilliard, Ms. Graf Mack was an assistant professor at Webster University and an adjunct professor at the University of Houston and Washington University. She is the host and co-producer of the *Moving Moments* podcast featuring conversations with groundbreaking artists in the field of dance.

# REMEMBERING JUDITH JAMISON



Judith Jamison. Photo by Andrew Eccles.

When Judith Jamison walked into a room, she had your attention. You might actually have heard her before you saw her because she always made it a point to say hello to everyone and expected the same in return. She cared deeply for everything that Alvin Ailey created, so much so that she ensured AILEY would always have a permanent home: The Joan Weill Center for Dance.

Joining the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1965, Judith Jamison quickly became an international star for whom Alvin Ailey created some of his most enduring roles, 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.

Ms. Jamison was the recipient of numerous awards and honors, including a primetime Emmy Award, a Kennedy Center Honor, and a National Medal of Arts. As a highly regarded choreographer, she created many celebrated works. Her autobiography, *Dancing Spirit*, was published in 1993, and in 2004, under her artistic



Alvin Ailey & Judith Jamison. Photo by Jack Mitchell, 1975.



Judith Jamison in Alvin Ailey's *Cry*. Photo by R. Faligant.

directorship, her idea of a permanent home for the AILEY organization was realized.

Ms. Jamison continued to dedicate herself to asserting the prominence of the arts in our culture, and she remained committed to promoting the significance of Mr. Ailey's legacy by mentoring, nurturing, and uplifting hundreds of dancers in Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Ailey II, The Ailey School, Ailey Arts In Education, and the Ailey Extension. Her death on November 9, 2024 prompted an outpouring of love and admiration around the world from those who were touched by her magnificent artistry and extraordinary spirit.



Ashley Kaylynn Green. Photo by Andrew Eccles.

## 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 creates daring yet delicate depictions of the Black experience in America. These are some of the choreographers writing the next chapter in the rich history of African American contributions to American dance.

## Customs, Cultures, and Social Forces

The African American influence on American dance has been enormous. Every style of dance, including social, 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, 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.

Mr. 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. Mr. 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 US 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 PhD in Anthropology. She devoted her life to studying and performing the dances of Africa and was asked by the governments 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 repertoires 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 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 PhD from the College of Arts and in 2009 he received an honorary PhD 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

## The Elements of Dance

|        |                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Body   | The dancer's unique and distinctive instrument capable of grand and discrete movement in infinite combinations.                                                                           |
| Action | Any movement which can include dance steps, facial expressions, lifts, gestures and everyday movement.                                                                                    |
| Space  | The whole design and use of the place in which a dance unfolds.                                                                                                                           |
| 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. |
| Energy | The amount or force of the movement, also sometimes referred to as the color or texture of the movement.                                                                                  |

## Dance productions sometimes incorporate 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.                                                                                                            |

## Styles of Dance

|                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Modern Dance        | A style of expression that is different from classical ballet, modern dance uses the body with a wider range of motion. The legs are turned parallel or turned in, feet can be flexed, the back can be rounded, and the head is not always held erect. There are many different modern dance techniques.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Horton              | A modern dance technique created by Lester Horton (1906-1953) that explores how many different ways the body can move through exercises he called Studies. Some of the Studies are for balance, some are to fortify and strengthen the body, and some work on the swinging action of the body. In Horton, the dancer tries to use as much space as possible by turning, bending, and jumping sideways, backward, or upside down. The Horton technique portrays a dynamic beauty. The shapes are clear and linear. The quality of the movement is lyrical and energetic. |
| Graham-based Modern | A dramatic and expressive dance technique created by Martha Graham (1894-1991) that is based on the principle of contraction and release. The movements are 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Ballet              | A dance form started in the royal courts of Europe in which the body is held upright and the legs are turned out from the hips. Ballet uses five basic positions of the feet, and the movement is meant to look elegant, effortless, and graceful all at once. The vocabulary of ballet is French.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

# AILEY ACTIVITIES

**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 AILEY mean to me?”



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

E

V

E

L

A

T

I

O

N

S

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

**Directions:** 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 more than 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.



# AILEY ARTS IN EDUCATION & COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Dr. Rachel McCaulsky  
Director, Arts In Education & Community Programs

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

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Alicia Graf Mack  
Artistic Director, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

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Bennett Rink  
Executive Director, Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation

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