

AILEY II

Study Guide



Ailey II in Alvin Ailey's *Isba*. Photo: Eduardo Patino, NYC.

ALL ABOUT AILEY

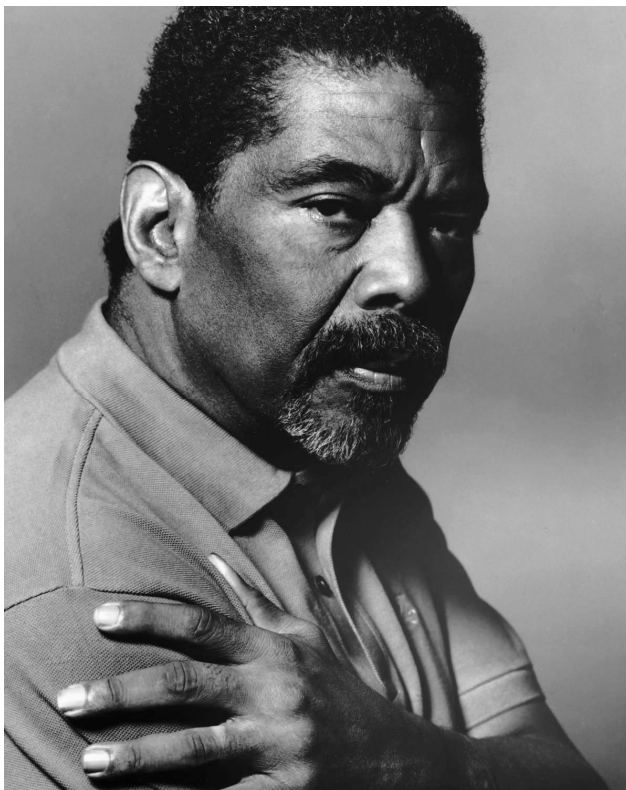


Photo by Eric N. Hong

Alvin Ailey, Founder

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater grew from the now fabled performance in March 1958, at the 92nd Street Young Men's Hebrew Association in New York. Led by Alvin Ailey and a group of young African-American modern dancers, that performance changed forever the perception of American dance. The Ailey company has gone on to perform for an estimated 21 million people in 48 states and in 71 countries on six continents, including two historic residencies in South Africa. The company has earned a reputation as one of the most acclaimed international ambassadors of American culture, promoting the uniqueness of the African-American cultural experience and the preservation and enrichment of the American modern dance heritage.

Born in Rogers, Texas on January 5, 1931, Alvin Ailey was introduced to dance by performances of the Katherine Dunham Dance Company and the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. His formal dance training began with an introduction to Lester Horton's classes by his friend, Carmen de Lavallade.

When Mr. Ailey began creating dance, he drew upon his "blood memories" of Texas, the blues, spirituals and gospel as inspiration, which resulted in the creation of his most popular and critically acclaimed work--*Revelations*.

Although he created 79 ballets over his lifetime, Alvin Ailey maintained that his company was not exclusively a repository for his own work. Today, the Company continues Mr. Ailey's mission by presenting important works of the past and commissioning new ones to add to the repertoire. In all, more than 200 works by over 70 choreographers have been performed by The Ailey.

Before his untimely death in 1989, Alvin Ailey asked Judith Jamison to become Artistic Director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Ms. Jamison wrote in her autobiography, *Dancing Spirit*, "I hope I'm a continuation of Alvin's vision. He has left me a road map. It's very clear. It works."

AILEY II

SYLVIA WATERS – ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Troy Powell – Associate Artistic Director

Company Members

Sarah Daley, Solomon Dumas, Brittany Engel-Adams, Renaldo Gardner,
Jacqueline Green, Collin Heyward, Yusaku Komori, Slim Mello,
Major Nesby, Kelly Robotham, Fana Tesfagiorgis, Elizabeth Washington

JUDITH JAMISON – ARTISTIC ADVISOR

Ailey II is produced by Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, Inc.

Sharon Gersten Luckman – Executive Director

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Programming and casting subject to change.

AILEY II COMPANY STORY



Ailey II's Jacqueline Green and Collin Heyward in Kyle Abraham's *The Corner*. Photo: Eduardo Patino, NYC.

Ailey II is an exceptional company that merges the spirit and energy of the country's best young dance talent with the passion and creative vision of today's most outstanding emerging choreographers. Started in 1974 as the Alvin Ailey Repertory Ensemble, Ailey II embodies Mr. Ailey's pioneering mission to establish an extended cultural community that provides dance performances, training and community programs for all people. Today, it has become one of the most popular dance companies in the United States.

Under the artistic direction of Sylvia Waters, Ailey II is comprised of the most promising scholarship students of The Ailey School and offers unique opportunities for artists to refine their technique while gaining invaluable performing and teaching experience during their tenure with the Company. Throughout its history, many Ailey II members have gone on to pursue successful careers as dancers, teachers and choreographers with other professional dance companies, on Broadway and in schools.

In recent years, Ailey II's distinctive repertory has included works by dance masters Alvin Ailey, Talley Beatty, Ulysses Dove, Lar Lubovitch, George Faison, Robert Battle, and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Artistic Director, Judith Jamison. Ailey II has also performed innovative works by emerging choreographers, including Thang Dao, Carlos dos Santos and Christopher Huggins. The Company's 2010-2011 tour consists of performances in over 35 cities across the United States and for the first time, embarking on an international tour with performances in France, Germany, and the UK. The Company has received numerous honors, awards and proclamations in recognition of its residencies at major colleges and universities as well as visits to elementary, middle and high schools across the US.

Ailey II is presented by the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, a non-profit organization, which also supports the activities of the renowned Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, The Ailey School, Ailey Arts In Education & Community Programs and the Ailey Extension.

"Ailey II can be counted on to deliver high-energy dancing made even more electric by the push of youthful ambition." *The New York Times*

BIOGRAPHIES

SYLVIA WATERS, Artistic Director

Since Ailey II's inception over 35 years ago, Artistic Director Sylvia Waters has been responsible for the growth and expansion of one of the country's most vibrant dance companies. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Dance at The Juilliard School, and studied with distinguished faculty members Antony Tudor, Martha Graham, Alfredo Corvino, Ethel Winter, Helen McGhee, Bertram Ross and Mary Hinkson. Following her graduation from Juilliard, Ms. Waters moved to Paris, where she appeared regularly on television and worked with Michel Descombey, then director of the Paris Opera Ballet, as well as Milko Sparembleck, and subsequently performed in Brussels and at the Summer Olympics in Mexico City. Ms. Waters returned to the United States in 1968 and joined Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. She toured as a principal dancer with the Company until assuming her current position with Ailey II. Ms. Waters has also established a distinguished reputation as a teacher, conducting master classes throughout the US and Europe. In 1997, she received an honorary doctorate from the State University of New York at Oswego. She has served as a panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts. In 2008, Ms. Waters received the Legacy Award as part of the 20th Annual IABD Festival, Syracuse University's Women of Distinction Award and the prestigious *Dance Magazine Award*. Most recently, Ms. Waters was a Visiting Lecturer at Harvard University during the 2010 spring semester.

TROY POWELL, Associate Artistic Director

Troy Powell, a native New Yorker, began his dance training at the age of nine at The Ailey School. Following his graduation from The High School of Performing Arts, he became a member of Ailey II. Mr. Powell joined Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1991. He toured throughout the United States, South America, Europe and South Africa for ten years before becoming a master teacher at The Ailey School and resident choreographer of Ailey II. Mr. Powell has choreographed ballets for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Ailey II, Dallas Black Dance Theater, National Dance Company of the Bahamas and Alaska Dance Theater, as well as three episodes of "Sesame Street." His guest artist credits include performing with companies such as Batsheva, Dallas Black Dance Theater and Complexions. Featured in an American Express commercial with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Mr. Powell has also appeared on television in George C. Wolfe's "The Colored Museum," the PBS Great Performances: Dance in America special *A Hymn for Alvin Ailey*, choreographed by Judith Jamison, and most recently, *America's Next Top Model*.

AILEY II WHO'S WHO

SARAH DALEY (South Elgin, IL) began training at the Faubourg School of Ballet in Illinois under the direction of Watmora Casey and Tatyana Mazur. She is a graduate of the Ailey/Fordham B.F.A. Program in Dance. Ms. Daley has participated in various summer intensives including Ballet Camp Illinois, The Kirov Academy, National Ballet School of Canada, The San Francisco Conservatory of Dance, and Ballet Adriatico in Italy. She is a recipient of a Youth American Grand Prix award and an ARTS Foundation award. Ms. Daley has performed works by choreographers Camille A. Brown, Christopher L. Huggins, Jiri Kylian, Jessica Lang, Trey McIntyre, and Ohad Naharin at venues including New York City Center, The Apollo Theater, and The Kennedy Center. This is her second season with Ailey II.

SOLOMON DUMAS (Chicago, IL) He began his formal dance training under the direction of Randy Duncan, Sandra Kaufman, and Anna Paskevka at the Chicago Academy for the Arts where he studied ballet, jazz, and Graham. Mr. Dumas appeared as a guest artist with companies including Momenta Dance Company, The Willingham Project, and Luna Negra Dance Theater. He performed in an off-Broadway production of *Black Nativity*, under the direction of the late Michael Malone and in 2006 danced backup for Donald Lawrence during the Gospel Stellar Awards. Mr. Dumas attended New World School of the Arts and was a fellowship student at The Ailey School. He was a member of the Garth Fagan Dance Company and an apprentice with Ailey II. This is his first season with the Company.

BRITTANY ENGEL-ADAMS (West Palm Beach, FL) began her studies at the Miami City Ballet School where she was awarded a full scholarship. She continued her training at Bak Middle School of the Arts and A.W. Dreyfoos Jr. School of the Arts where as a senior, she was awarded an Honorable Mention in Modern Dance by the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts (NFAA). Ms. Engel-Adams trained on scholarship with Ballet Florida and later became a fellowship recipient at The Ailey School. This is her second season with Ailey II.

RENALDO GARDNER (Gary, IN) began his dance training at age five with Tony Simpson and is a graduate of Talent Unlimited High School. He attended the Emerson School for Visual and Performing Arts, and studied with Larry Brewer and Michael Davis. Mr. Gardner was a fellowship student at The Ailey School and has trained on scholarship at Ballet Chicago, Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, and had an internship at the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance. In 2008, he received second place in modern dance from the National

Foundation for Advancement in the Arts. Mr. Gardner has worked with notable choreographers such as Gary Abbot, Christopher L. Huggins, Kevin Iga Jeff, and Troy Powell. This is his third season with Ailey II.

JACQUELINE GREEN (Baltimore, MD) began her dance training at the Baltimore School for the Arts under the direction of Norma Pera, Deborah Robinson, and Anton Wilson. She is currently a senior in The Ailey/Fordham B.F.A. Program in Dance. Ms. Green completed numerous summer programs including Pennsylvania Regional Ballet, Chautauqua Institution, Earl Mosley's Institute of the Arts, and Jacob's Pillow. She has performed works by choreographers including Alvin Ailey, George Faison, Ronald K. Brown, Elisa Monte, Troy Powell, Helen Pickett, Francesca Harper, Azsure Barton, Earl Mosley, Francisco Martinez, Errol Grimes, and Michael Vernon. In November 2009, Ms. Green was the recipient of the Martha Hill's Young Professional's Award. This is her first season with Ailey II.

COLLIN HEYWARD (Newport News, VA) began his dance training at The Academy of Dance and Gymnastics in Newport News, VA under the direction of Linda Haas where he studied ballet, tap, and jazz. He then went to study further at Denise Wall's Dance Energy in Virginia Beach, VA under the direction of Denise Wall. Currently, Mr. Heyward is a senior in the Ailey/Fordham B.F.A. Program in Dance and has performed works by Robert Battle, Ronald K. Brown, George Faison, Christopher Huggins, Troy Powell, Earl Mosley, and Francisco Martinez. This is his first season with Ailey II.

YUSAKU KOMORI (Tokyo, Japan) began his dance training at Take Two Dance Academy. He continued his training at Dance "MOVE"!! and The Ailey School where he was a fellowship student. Mr. Komori was first prize winner in three prestigious Japanese competitions: Jazz Dance Association of Japan, Dance Stage Project, and Nextream. He performed in many productions in Japan and since coming to New York he has performed with the Francesca Harper Project at New York City Center and The Joyce Theater and has also worked with the Cecilia Martha Dance Company. Mr. Komori joined Ailey II in 2010.

SLIM MELLO (Salvador-Bahia, Brazil) began his dance training at Grupo de Dança do Liceu de Artes under the direction of Beth Rangel and Jorge Silva. He was a scholarship student at the Bolshoi School and performed the ballet *Don Quixote*. Mr. Mello was a member of Balé Folclórico da Bahia under the direction of Walson Botelho and Zebrinha and studied Afro-Brazilian dance with Nildinha Fonseca. In 2008, he was a member of DanceBrazil under the direction of Jelon Vieira. As a fellowship student at The Ailey School, Mr. Mello performed in Alvin Ailey's *Memoria* at New York City Center. He has worked with many choreographers including Marilza Oliveira, Kevin Irving, Joaquim de Santana, Steven Rooks, Carlos dos Santos, and Vernard Gilmore. This is Mr. Mello's first year with Ailey II.

MAJOR NESBY (Atlanta, GA) began his dance training at Decatur School of Ballet and attended Dekalb School of the Arts under the Direction of Pamela Jones Malavé. He continued his dance training at Point Park University with a concentration in ballet and trained on scholarship at The Alonzo King Ballet School and American Ballet Theatre. Mr. Nesby was a fellowship student at The Ailey School. He performed works by choreographers Lauri Stallings, Edgar Zendejas, Bill T. Jones, and Ron de Jesus and performed with Opus Dance Theatre and The Francesca Harper Project. This is Mr. Nesby's first season with Ailey II.

KELLY ROBOTHAM (New York, NY) began dancing at the age of 11. She attended New World School of the Arts where she graduated with an award for most improved dancer. Ms. Robotham trained as a fellowship student at The Ailey School and Dance Theater of Harlem. She was accepted to The Juilliard School where she worked with choreographers David Parker, Adam Hougland, Johannes Wieland, Azsure Barton, Robert Battle, and Camille A. Brown. Ms. Robotham performed works by José Limón, Martha Graham, Mark Morris, and Jerome Robbins. In 2009, she was selected from The Juilliard Dance Division to participate in a cultural exchange tour to Costa Rica and soon after she became an apprentice with River North Chicago Dance Company. This is Ms. Robotham's first season with Ailey II.

FANA TESFAGIORGIS (Madison, WI) is a recent graduate of The Ailey /Fordham B.F.A. Program in Dance, receiving her degree in dance and a minor in journalism. She began her training at Madison Ballet and went on to attend performing arts high school, Interlochen Arts Academy under the direction of Mark Borchelt. Ms. Tesfagiorgis also trained in summer intensives at Earl Mosley's Institute of the Arts and Alonzo King's Lines Ballet. She has performed works by Alvin Ailey, Earl Mosley, Robert Battle, Hope Boykin, Ronald K. Brown, Christopher Huggins, Lar Lubovitch and Pedro Ruiz. This is Ms. Tesfagiorgis' first season with Ailey II.

ELIZABETH WASHINGTON (Baltimore, MD) began her formal dance training at the age of 12 at Towson University Children's Dance Division. She later attended Carver Center for the Arts and Technology in Towson, MD. Ms. Washington participated in a number of summer intensives including The Kirov Academy, Point Park University, and Bates Dance Festival. She also trained on fellowship at The Ailey School. Ms. Washington has performed works by Darrell Moultrie, Troy Powell, Alvin Ailey, Judith Jamison, Ronald K. Brown, and Abdur-Rahim Jackson and had the opportunity to perform during Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's 50th Anniversary at New York City Center and in Mr. Ailey's *Memoria*. This is her first season with Ailey II.

The Magic of Ailey Dance

Before Ailey II performs there is an important process that takes place.

THE CREATIVE PROCESS

There are five fundamental elements in creating a dance. They are the foundation of the work that you see on stage. This process is a collaborative effort. The descriptions below should give you some insight into what is involved in the creation of a dance.

The Dance

The person who creates the dance, the sequence of steps and style of execution is the choreographer. The choreographer has ideas, concepts, images or emotions that he/she wants to convey to the audience. The choreographer makes all of the artistic decisions regarding what the work will consist of. Some choreographers create works that may include solos, duets, quintets, trios, or the entire company of dancers. For example, *Cry*, choreographed by Alvin Ailey, is a solo performed by a female; *Hymn*, choreographed by Judith Jamison uses the entire company. The choreographer consults the Artistic Director in casting the dancers into roles for each dance. The choreographer works with the dancers in rehearsal to teach the dance and to perfect the execution of the steps. Rehearsals range from two to eight weeks, so the dancers have to be very versatile, and must be able to adapt to many different techniques of dance.

The Music

Many choreographers commission a new piece of music from a composer. Sometimes, the choreographer selects an existing piece of music that inspires them or represents the images or concepts of the dance. Choreographers that have worked with Ailey II have used existing music as well as commissioned works. For *Revelations*, Mr. Ailey used traditional Negro Spirituals.

The Costumes

A costume designer creates the designs for the costumes. The designer works very closely with the choreographer to ensure that the choreographer's vision is reflected in the costumes. They choose the fabric, colors and the best method of construction that will allow the dancers to move easily. Once the designs are completed and the dancers are measured by the wardrobe staff, the measurements and designs are sent to a costume construction company for assembly.

The Set

The set designer creates the designs for props and sets. Props and sets are used in a variety of ways in the dance. Most sets create the decor for the dance. Props are items that the dancers use in the dance. The props and sets should reflect the choreographer's vision and complement the choreography. Props can range from the umbrella, stools and fans in *Revelations* to the wooden bench used in *Mourner's Bench*.

The Lighting

The lighting designer creates the design using lights, color and special effects. Most dances use many lights at once to create the mood on stage. This designer also works very closely with the choreographer and all the other designers to create an atmosphere that enhances the dance. The lighting designer has to ensure that his/her ideas will coincide with the choreographer's vision. Once the idea is developed, it has to be put into a written format: the lighting plot. This plot informs the lighting technicians where the lights should be hung and how they are wired.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

DANCE TERMS

Modern dance

-a means of expression that is different from 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; 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 and includes varied dynamics. The Horton technique gives a feeling of strength and energy.

Graham-based

Modern

-created by Martha Graham; 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; back appears rounded in a contraction and the chest is lifted in a release; movement itself is dramatic and expressive.

Dunham

-a technique created by Katherine Dunham; the Dunham technique is a blend of the Caribbean, West African and Afro-American folk patterns of movement and rhythms. The technique has been devised to encompass the movements of the indigenous folk patterns of these cultures. The original dance patterns have been preserved. But the dances have been slightly altered in order to be more acceptable, choreographically speaking, to the modern dance concert and theater. The technique also employs the mediums of ballet, modern dance forms, jazz and basic folk patterns.

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.

Jazz

- an American style of movement that grew out of American jazz music; uses the hips more freely than ballet or modern dance; there are many different kinds of jazz styles.

Tap

-a type of dance characterized by the rapid tapping of the toes, and heel on the floor; generally done in shoes fitted with cleats or metal plates to emphasize the beats.

Glossary - continued

<i>Solo</i>	-any performance by one person.
<i>Duet</i>	-any performance by two people.
<i>Ensemble</i>	-the united performance of an entire group.
<i>Leotard</i>	-a skintight, one-piece garment worn by dancers.
<i>Repertoire</i>	-the list of works that a company is prepared to perform.
<i>Work</i>	-a word that dancers use to refer to a dance. Other words that are used in this manner are: "piece," "ballet," or "dance."
<i>Choreographer</i>	-a person who composes dance works.
<i>Second-home city</i>	-a location where a company tours every year and there is an organized support group there to assist the company.
<i>Repertory company</i>	-a dance company that performs many types of works by many different choreographers.

PRODUCTION / THEATRICAL TERMS

<i>balcony</i>	-an upper level seating platform in a theater.
<i>beams</i>	-position for lighting equipment in auditorium in front of the proscenium.
<i>booking representatives</i>	-paid agents that arrange bookings with presenters for the Company.
<i>borders</i>	-drapery that is hung horizontally across the top of the stage.
<i>call board</i>	-bulletin board used backstage to share important information to all staff involved with the production.
<i>commission</i>	-the request and purchase of a new art work for a specific group.
<i>contract</i>	-a legally binding agreement between two parties.
<i>cues</i>	-a verbal or technical signal used to inform a performer or technician to begin an action.
<i>cyclorama</i>	-stage backdrop, sometimes U-shaped; neutral or light color; used for sky effects.
<i>front of house</i>	-all areas in the theater outside of the performance auditorium i.e. lobby, box-office, etc.
<i>house</i>	-the auditorium in a theater with seating for viewing a performance.
<i>house lights</i>	-the overhead lights in the house.
<i>legs</i>	-set of draperies on the side of stage used to mask the backstage area from the audience.
<i>lighting board</i>	-a mechanism that can adjust and control the lighting.
<i>lighting plot</i>	-a technical grid which denotes the arrangements of a lighting design.
<i>load-in</i>	-the process of bringing into the theater and setting up all equipment and materials for a performance.
<i>load-out</i>	-the process of removing from the theater all equipment and materials.
<i>mezzanine</i>	-a low section between two main stories in a building.
<i>presenter</i>	-a group or theater that sponsors the performance financially and provides the space for performance or activity.
<i>print advertisements</i>	-promotional materials that are included in magazines, newspapers and journals.
<i>proscenium</i>	-the arch that separates the stage from the auditorium.

Production / Theatrical Terms – Continued

<i>royalties</i>	-an agreed portion of the income from a work paid to its composer, choreographer, etc. each time the work is performed for the public.
<i>road boxes</i>	-boxes specifically designed to carry technical equipment.
<i>scrim</i>	- finely woven netting with a rectangular weaves through which light may or may not be seen, depending on how it is lit. Sometimes it is hung as a backdrop or as a curtain between the audience and performers.
<i>sign-in sheet</i>	-the sheet on the call board used by the dancers and crew to sign-in to keep account for all the staff on tour.
<i>site visit</i>	-a review of a performance space prior to performance to acquire technical information on the space.
<i>special</i>	-a light focused for an effect exclusive to one work.
<i>strike</i>	-the breakdown of all equipment and materials that were assembled for the performance in preparation for load-out.
<i>tour</i>	-a long journey including performances in a number of places in sequence.
<i>wings</i>	-the unseen space on the left or right side of the stage produced by hanging draperies (legs) at the sides of the stage to mask off-stage area.