



About Ailey II



Ailey II is universally renowned for merging 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.

Founded in 1974 as the Alvin Ailey Repertory Ensemble, the company embodies his pioneering mission to establish an extended cultural community that provides dance performances, training, and community programs for all people. Under the direction of Sylvia Waters from 1974 to 2012, Ailey II flourished into one of the most popular modern dance companies, combining a rigorous touring schedule with extensive community outreach programs.

With Artistic Director Troy Powell at the helm, Ailey II continues to thrive as he brings a fresh dimension to this beloved company. *Dance Magazine* calls Ailey II "second to none," and *The New York Times* declares, "There's nothing like an evening spent with Ailey II, the younger version of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater."

Ailey II's 2018–19 tour will reach audiences in dozens of cities across the globe and includes a New York season from March 13–17, 2019, at NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts.

HOW TO BE A GREAT AUDIENCE MEMBER

Attending a live presentation or performance is an important part of learning about the arts. For many of you, it may be your first experience in a venue like the Heymann Performing Arts Center and you may not know what is expected of you and your classmates in terms of audience etiquette.

But, now you do! Read on!

We encourage each teacher to take a few moments to discuss these guidelines with their students prior to the presentation or performance.

Pay attention to lighting! It's one of the most important elements of a dance performance. Be prepared. The theater may be quite dark at times. No need to squeal.

Being a great audience member requires respect – respect for the dancers, your teacher, your fellow classmates and yourself.

The success of a presentation depends, in part, on the audience members. When you help create a supportive and focused atmosphere, you help create the best experience possible for everyone involved.

Once the performance begins, **no one should leave his or her seat until after the show ends, unless there is an emergency.**

Two of the most basic elements of being a great audience member is listening and watching attentively. Here's a link to a video that suggests how important listening and watching are.

Step By Step with Alvin Ailey: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4bojuTK7Rw>

Remember, everything you do and say has an effect on the dancers. When you are watching a live show, the performers can hear and see you.

Please avoid activities that will distract from the presentation. Help the dancers give the presentation that you deserve by not talking, eating or drinking during the presentation.

Please make sure that all cell phones are turned **OFF**.

If you've enjoyed yourself, please feel free to clap at the end of the presentation to show your appreciation. Applaud! Cheer! Give a standing ovation!

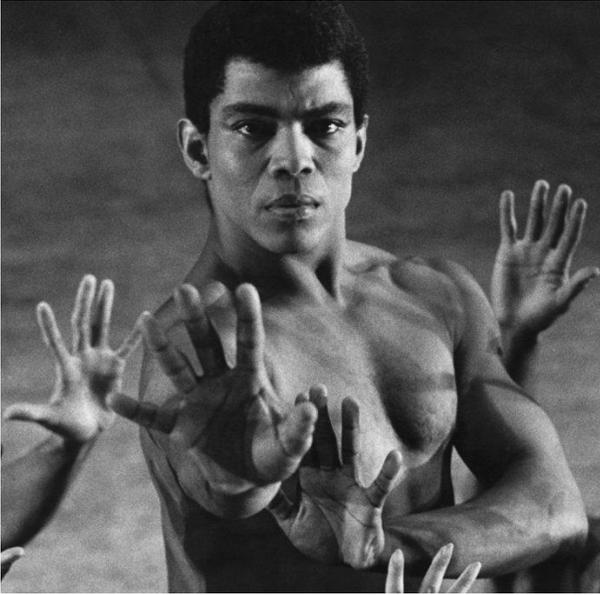
Also, feel free to ask questions about the show. If you do not feel comfortable asking your questions in front of others, ask the presenter(s) after the presentation is over. They will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

If you see or hear something during the presentation that you especially like, let the presenter or performers know after the presentation or on the evaluation. They appreciate your comments.

Keep in mind each live presentation is an entirely unique experience. What you are participating in will never occur the same way twice.

Above all, enjoy yourself!

About Alvin Ailey



Born in Texas in 1931, Alvin Ailey was a choreographer who founded the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1958. It was a hugely popular, multi-racial modern dance ensemble that popularized modern dance around the world thanks to extensive world tours. His most famous dance is *Revelations*, a celebratory study of religious spirit. Ailey received the Kennedy Center Honors in 1988. A year later, on December 1, 1989, Ailey died of AIDS in New York City.

Early Life

Born on January 5, 1931, in Rogers, Texas, Alvin Ailey became one of the leading figures in 20th century modern dance. His mother was only a teenager when he was born and his father left the family early on. He grew up poor in the small Texas town of Navasota. Ailey later drew inspiration from the black church services he attended as well as the music he heard at the local dance hall. At the age of 12, he left Texas for Los Angeles.

In Los Angeles, Ailey proved to be a gifted student in many ways. He excelled at languages and athletics. After seeing the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo perform, Ailey was inspired to pursue dancing. He began studying modern dance with Lester Horton in 1949. He joined Horton's dance company the following year.

Career Highlights

In 1954, Ailey made his Broadway debut in Truman Capote's short-lived musical *House of Flowers*. The following year, he also appeared in *The Carefree Tree*. Ailey served as the lead dancer in another Broadway musical, *Jamaica*, starring Lena Horne and Ricardo Montalban in 1957. While in New York, Ailey also had a chance to study dance with Martha Graham and acting with Stella Adler.

Ailey achieved his greatest fame with his own dance company, which he founded in 1958. That same year, he debuted *Blues Suite*, a piece that drew from his southern roots. Another of his major early works was *Revelations*, which drew inspiration from the African American music of his youth. The blues, spirituals and gospel songs all informed this dance piece. According to the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater website, *Revelations* came from Ailey's "'blood memories' of his childhood in rural Texas and the Baptist Church."

In the 1960s, Ailey took his company on the road. The U.S. State Department sponsored his tour, which helped create his international reputation. He stopped performing in the mid-1960s, but he continued to choreograph numerous masterpieces. Ailey's *Masakela Language*, which probed the experience being black in South Africa, premiered in 1969. He also formed the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center—now called the Ailey School—that same year.

In 1974, Ailey used the music of Duke Ellington as the backdrop for *Night Creature*. He also expanded his dance company by establishing the Alvin Ailey Repertory Ensemble that same year. During his long career, Ailey choreographed close to 80 ballets.

Final Years

In 1988, Alvin Ailey was honored by the Kennedy Center for his contributions to the arts. This prestigious accolade came near the end of his life. Ailey died at the age of 58 on December 1, 1989, at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City. At the time, *The New York Times* reported that he had suffered from "terminal blood dyscrasia, a rare disorder that affects the bone marrow and red blood cells." It was later revealed that Ailey had died of AIDS.

The dance world mourned the passing of one of its great pioneers. Alvin Ailey "had a big heart and a tremendous love of the dance," dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov told *The New York Times*, adding, "His work made an important contribution to American culture."

Despite his untimely death, Ailey continues to be an important figure in the arts through the ballets he created and the organizations he founded. The dancers with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater have performed for more than 20 million people around the world and countless others have seen their work through numerous television broadcasts.

Here's a link to a video in which Judith Jamison, who became Ailey's artistic director after the death of Mr. Ailey, talks about modern dance movement and technique.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OU8nmRHP98>

Here is a timeline that shows the legacy of Alvin Ailey and his dance institutions:

<https://www.alvinailey.org/about/history>

Ailey Trivia

Using the information provided above, information found in the provided links, how many of these Alvin Ailey trivia questions can you answer correctly?

1. In what year did Alvin Ailey start his dance company?
2. Which of Alvin Ailey's works is the most recognized and still performed by both Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and the junior company, Ailey II? What genres of music inspired this masterpiece?
3. In the earlier days, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Company traveled around the country and called their travels what?
4. Which year was Ailey II, originally known as Alvin Ailey Repertory Ensemble, founded?
5. Who is the active Artistic Director of Ailey II and how many dancers are currently hired and dancing for the junior company?
6. In which year did Alvin Ailey die? Who became the Artistic Director, under Mr. Ailey's wish, after his passing? She was also one of his most recognized and talented dancers throughout the history of his company.
7. In the year 2018, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater celebrated which anniversary?
8. What are the two most important honors given to Alvin Ailey?

Want to learn more about Alvin Ailey and his legacy as a civil rights leader, and the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation? Visit these links:

<https://www.biography.com/people/alvin-ailey-9177959> (Life of Alvin Ailey)

<https://www.alvinailey.org/about/history> (Explore our history. Year by year breakdown of the entire company's history)

<https://www.alvinailey.org/about/ailey-ii> (Ailey II page)

What to watch for; what to listen for:

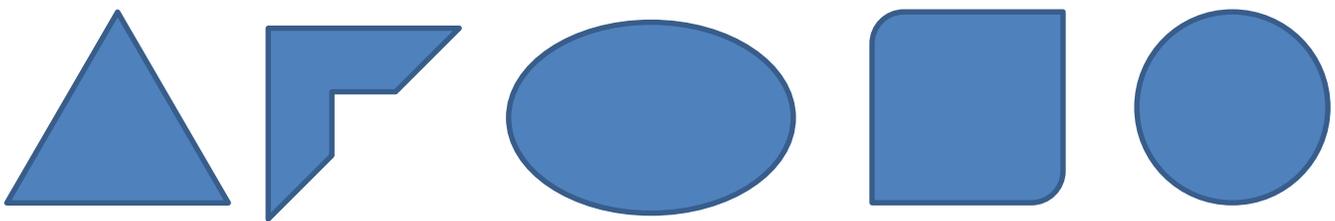
Geometry: Yes, there is geometry on stage in dance all the time, so be on the lookout for shapes, angles and lines. When a dancer leans into an **arabesque** (the dancer is supported on one leg and the other leg is extended horizontally) is the angle formed **obtuse** or is it a **right angle**?

What other shapes are the dancers creating with their bodies? Straight lines, triangles, rectangles? Are their arms perpendicular to the floor or are they parallel? Are their arms in circles? Can you create a circle with your arms? Using the floor as your **base**, can you create a triangle with your arms, torso, legs and feet?

When the dancers are in a formation (where they are placed on the stage), do they form a triangle, a rectangle, a circle, an ellipse or a line? Do you see any other shapes?

Why not get five classmates together and see if you can create each of these shapes. Can your group move to the left and maintain your shape? What if you jump to the left? Does your shape stay the same? If it doesn't, try focusing more on maintaining the shape. This is how dance works! Without geometry, dance would not be as interesting to see.

Some Shapes to Look For



Think about how shapes change the mood of dance. Do arms held at right angles indicate surrender? Do arms in a circle create an image of peace and belonging, or do they create an image of preventing someone from moving away? Are dancers moving in a circle suggest the restraint of another person or do dancers moving in a circle suggest joy and celebration?

What is the difference between **asymmetry** and **symmetry**, another geometric characteristic of dance? Watch for symmetry. That's when all of the dancers are moving in the same way, in the same direction. You'll know when you see asymmetry because either some dancers' movements change, or a dancer may break out of the symmetrical shape or use a different choreographic sequence. Oh, and do you know **choreography** and **choreographic movement** mean?

There's always math: Dance, like music uses math, especially fractions. In music, you'll hear quarter notes, eighth notes, triplets and more. Think about a waltz, either music or dance. Waltzes are almost always in triplet form. Dancers learn their choreography in "counts." For a waltz, the counts are "One, two, three. One, two, three." If it's in another count, the dances may be counting from one to four, or one to seven or one to 13 or any other range.

And then there's physics:

Gravity:

Dancers work against **gravity**. That's one of the reasons dancers are so strong.

The forces acting on an individual dancer create a push-pull relationship between the dancer and the surrounding space. The force a dancer exerts on the floor is affected by the direction and magnitude of the force. When balancing in **releve**--meaning on toes--a dancer exerts a force against the floor that is equal to the force of gravity being exerted on the dancer. This results in a zero sum force acting on the body placing the dancer in his or her center of gravity—therefore, balanced.

How long can you stand on your toes or the balls of your feet? Are you centered? Hold your head naturally up and look straight ahead. Are you more centered and balanced?

Try jumping straight up. Now, swing your arms up from your sides as you jump. You can probably jump higher because, when you swing your arms up, you are working harder against gravity.

Directional Movement

Moving in a constant direction, as in performing dance combinations across the floor, creates momentum. **Momentum** is mass in motion. The amount of momentum depends on the amount of mass moving and how fast that mass is moving. Developing strength in the legs helps dancers move across the floor faster. Combinations of steps across the floor produce **linear momentum**, while turns involve **angular momentum**. **Torque** and **rotational inertia** are the physics principles that can affect the speed and balance of a dancer's turns and spins. Oh, and then there's also **centrifugal force**.

Torque and Turns

Torque is important in the production of many dance turns. This can come from the friction produced by pushing off the floor. The harder a dancer pushes off the floor, the faster the dancer spins. Torque also can be produced by the leg. The extension and retraction of the leg in turns, such as in a **fouette**, affects the rotational inertia of the turn. In other words, a dancer slows down when the leg is extended and speeds up when the leg is retracted. If you've ever watched ice skating competitions, you'll know what we mean.

Adapted from:

<https://www.livestrong.com/article/507653-physics-dance-movements/>

Ailey Trivia Answers

- 1) 1958
- 2) "Revelations"; blues, gospel, and spiritual.
- 3) "the station wagon tours"
- 4) 1974
- 5) Tory Powell; 12
- 6) 1989; Judith Jamison
- 7) 60th anniversary
- 8) The Kennedy Center Honor and the National Medal of Freedom

SEE YOU AT THE SHOW!

www.upstagelive.org

Questions? jackie@upstagelive.org



For Teachers

You don't need to be a dancer to understand and demonstrate how math and dance combine in the classroom. Here are a couple of links that we found interesting.

<http://www.mathinyourfeet.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/danceequations/videos/745618295528764/>